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NOVEMBER 2017

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Sunset over Iceland's
Jökulsárlón lagoon,
170 miles east of
Reykjavík

This month...

...our cover theme is 'Go further', to which I'll add 'and tread lightly as you do'. At Lonely Planet we've always held that responsible travel can be a force for good. We've been underscoring that point by working closely with the UN World Tourism Organization to support the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, and it flows through the pages of this issue. The belief includes pioneering beyond the crowded hotspots of Iceland (**p43**), learning from Indigenous guides in far Northern Queensland (**p56**), and supporting local producers in tiny São Tomé and Príncipe (**p76**) – tasting some of the world's best chocolate along the way!



- Subscribe! See p14
- Follow us on Twitter @LPTraveller and Instagram @lonelyplanetmags
- Join our Lonely Planet Traveller Insiders panel at immediateinsiders.com



Cape Tribulation on Queensland's coast.
ABOVE Willie Gordon, a tour leader and
elder of the Nugal-warra people

Fishing boats at Morro Peixe
beach on São Tomé.
ABOVE The rock of Pico Cão Grande



NOVEMBER 2017



In this issue...

POSTCARDS

Your travel photos and stories

- 8 Moscow at sunset, and more of your images from around the world

SUBSCRIBE

- 14 Save 27% and get our *Atlas of Adventure*

GLOBETROTTER

The latest travel news and discoveries

- 16 New flights to Nashville, Tennessee; celebrating Day of the Dead; city discoveries on foot and by bike, and more

EASY TRIPS

Short breaks you can take right now

- 31 Go wild for truffles in Croatia
32 Autumn pub stays in Kent
33 Haunted Halloween happenings from NYC to Dublin
34 Bracing walks in the Yorkshire Dales
35 Dine at a surprising London pop-up
35 Join the beer revolution in Newcastle
36 An animal safari – close to home
37 Cling on to summer in Portugal
38 Review of the Month: Glenapp Castle, Ayrshire, Scotland

GREAT ESCAPES

Your next big trip mapped out

- 43 Look beyond the crowded spots to Iceland's lesser-known east coast, for arts and crafts in unlikely places, lagoon boat trips and glacier traverses

FEATURES

More big ideas for your bucketlist

- 56 Take a road trip up the northeast coast of Queensland to discover some truly Australian nature and traditions
68 Tuck into France's best dishes on a gastronomic tour of the country
76 The world in miniature on the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe
88 Hole up in our favourite cabins, from Wales to British Columbia
100 The Photographer's Story: behind the scenes in some of the most incredible libraries on the planet

TOP PICKS

Themed guides to take with you

- 117 Explore Tuscany's magical hilltop towns
121 The cream of Prague's nightlife
123 Virginia, USA, in a nutshell
127 Where to find the best eats in Singapore

Where in Europe can you see icebergs year-round? p43



Celebrate autumn in Croatia p31

Next stop: Music City p22



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Look for these symbols to quickly identify listings

Sights	Tours	Drinking
Beaches	Festivals	Entertainment
Activities	Sleeping	Shopping
Courses	Eating	Information & Transport

All prices correct at time of going to press. Prices for hotel rooms are for double, en suite rooms with breakfast in low season, unless otherwise stated. Flight prices are for the cheapest return fares, including one piece of hold baggage, unless otherwise stated.



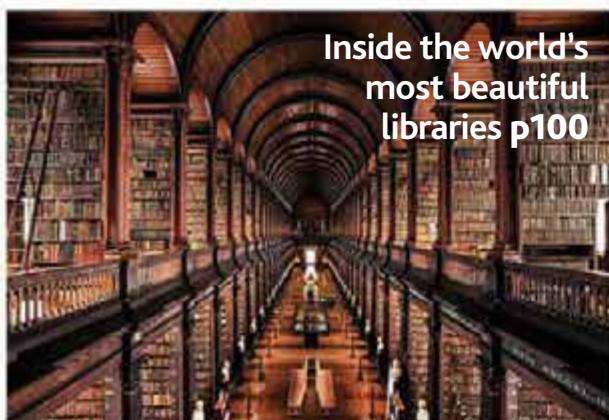
Lost World
adventures off the
African coast p76



Have we found Australia's
best beach? p56



Bon appétit in France p68



Inside the world's
most beautiful
libraries p100



Snuggle up in our
favourite cabins
p88

DESTINATION INDEX

Australia	
Queensland	p56
Austria	
Styria	p91
Canada	
Alberta	p10
British Columbia	p92
China	
Gansu	p12
Croatia	
Istria	p31
Czech Republic	
Prague	p121
Denmark	
Møn	p93
England	p20
Kent	p32
London	p20, p33, p35
Newcastle	p35
North	
Yorkshire	p34, p91
West Sussex	p36, p90
York	p33
France	p68
Paris	p33, p104
Germany	p102, p103
Baltic Coast	p91
Iceland	
East Iceland	p43
Ireland	
Dublin	p33, p101
Italy	p103
South Tyrol	p97
Tuscany	p117
Mexico	p25
Norway	
Nordland	p95
Poland	
Łódź	p7
Portugal	p102
Porto Santo	p37
São Tomé and Príncipe	p76
Scotland	
Ayrshire	p38
Inverness-shire	p98
Singapore	p127
Spain	
Catalonia	p129
Russia	
Moscow	p8
Tanzania	p26
Tuvalu	p23
USA	
California	p16
Nashville	p22
New York City	
New York State	p95
Virginia	p123
Wisconsin	p97
Wales	
Brecon Beacons	p93



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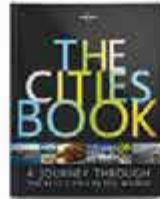
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BEHIND THE SCENES

What Team Lonely Planet has been up to this month

A new edition of Lonely Planet's *Cities Book* hits the shelves



Out this month is the second edition of our bestselling *Cities Book*. This supersized tome presents beautiful photos and city stats for 200 of the world's most exciting urban destinations. Among them are over 30 new entries, including the pictured: Sighisoara, Romania (1); Lima, Peru (2); Charleston, USA (3); Gonder, Ethiopia (4); and Nara, Japan (5). It's the perfect coffee table book to feed your wanderlust and help you choose your next city break.



THIS MONTH'S COVER

We've set our logo free from its blue background panel, as on our books, apps and website these days – and as it appeared on Lonely Planet's first-ever book, *Across Asia on the Cheap*, 44 years ago. Also reflecting our heritage, we're simply known as *Lonely Planet* magazine again – just as when we launched nine years ago. This issue's newsstand cover shows Australia's Great Barrier Reef (far left), and our subscriber cover a beach on the African island of Principe.

JUST BACK FROM... ŁÓDŹ



Picture editor Claire Richardson is back from a weekend discovering the rejuvenation of post-industrial Łódź (pronounced 'woodge'), Poland's third-largest city (@claire_pictured_this).



Chilling out with a pint of craft beer outside Piwoteka pub



Magnificent façade of Vienna House Andel's Łódź (former textile factory)



Chasing trams on a pedicab tour around the city

Postcards

WHERE YOU'VE BEEN AND WHAT YOU'VE SEEN



Why not get involved? We'd love to include your best new travel photos. Send us your highest resolution JPEG images (not exceeding 15MB) along with a pic of yourself to postcards@lonelyplanet.com

The Radisson Royal Hotel was commissioned by Joseph Stalin and was opened in 1957 under its old name of Hotel Ukraina. It reopened in 2010 after a three-year renovation

MOSCOW, RUSSIA

Red sky at night

I took this picture of Moscow, where I live, during evening drinks with a friend at the rooftop Kalina Bar. We arrived at sunset and I immediately went to the balcony to shoot the view, because when it's getting dark, you can lose the shot if you wait for a couple of minutes. The view was so incredible that even a good shot can hardly convey its beauty. For me, the highlights of the photo are the illumination of the Radisson Royal Hotel and the beauty of Federation Tower East – the highest skyscraper in Europe. I find this juxtaposition of classical Stalinist architecture and 21st-century glass skyscrapers very striking.



Mikhail Gerasimov (@shtozamisha)
works in banking in Moscow

**BANFF NATIONAL
PARK, CANADA**

Sleep on it

I recently took a solo trip to Canada and knew that I wanted to visit and shoot Moraine Lake in Banff National Park. I left my hotel at 4:30am to arrive before most other visitors, grabbing my tripod and bear spray (just in case) and heading up a small trail to a viewpoint off the lake. I've travelled a lot and seen many places, but the view that met me at the trail's end almost took my breath away – it was one of the most beautiful I've ever seen. It was before sunrise, and two travellers were asleep in their hammocks – what a beautiful place to set up camp. When I look at my photo, I can still feel the peace and quiet of that unforgettable scene.



Frank Jørgensen, an engineer, spent a week exploring Canada



POSTCARDS

Send your best new travel photos to postcards@lonelyplanet.com

This angle on Moraine Lake, looking towards the Valley of the Ten Peaks, is known as the Twenty-Dollar View, as it was depicted on Canada's \$20 bill from 1970 to 1993



GANSU, CHINA

Stony stare

This shot was taken from over 150 feet above the ground. I was standing on a narrow wooden stairway, part of a large system bolted onto the cliff face of Maijishan hill in northwest China. These stairways give visitors access to 194 Buddhist grottoes and more than 7,000 sculptures hewn into the side of Maijishan hill by the first Buddhists in China around 400 AD. The stairway was so busy with Chinese tourists that I nearly overlooked this statue, but his gaze held me. Was he straining against his modern bonds with a red face and clenched fists? Was it defiance or pity in his ancient stone eyes? I'm still wondering.



Richard Waller travelled the Silk Road after his first year at Durham Uni



Maijishan was a stopping point on the Silk Road between the Mediterranean and the long-time Chinese capital Xi'an

Each month, we ask our Instagram followers to share their best shots on a travel theme; we print our favourites here. Want to get involved? Follow us at [@lonelyplanetmags](#)

Ode to autumn



'This view past Paris' Île Saint Louis to Notre Dame is like a painting come to life' (@frenchcalifornian)



'Post-sunset strolls along the beach in Portballintrae on Northern Ireland's north coast' (@clairesteele5)



'An itzy-bitsy spider explores the Herrenhausen Gardens in Hanover, Germany' (@herrundfrauweiss)



'Beauty in nature, like these droplets on an autumn leaf, always leaves me breathless' (jayspinzinsta)



'Napa Valley pumpkins ready for fall in Northern California, USA' (@j_oiseau)



'An autumnal sunrise in Brecon Beacons National Park from the summit of Pen-y-Fan' (@mikethesnow)



'A beautiful autumnal door within the grounds of Pollok House in Glasgow' (@lovefromglasgow)



'A deer basks in the hazy sunset light in Richmond Park, southwest London' (@timsonmez)



'Immersed in the magnificent fall foliage in the forest of the New York Botanical Garden' (@ppkitts)

Next month: New horizons



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Globe Trotter

A WORLD OF TRAVEL NEWS AND DISCOVERIES

Superlative sequoias

Things are looking up for tree-huggers worldwide. Mariposa Grove, Yosemite National Park's largest giant sequoia grove, is due to reopen to the public this autumn. Its two-year hiatus has been well-spent: new hiking trails and accessible boardwalks will allow visitors to get up close to these colossal trees, which are among the biggest and oldest on Earth. And if you want to know just how big and old that can be, see how the species' record figures compare with some of humankind's creations.

- The grove reopens in November; nps.gov/yose

Height:

95m



Taller than
the Statue
of Liberty
(93m)

Circumference:

31 metres

Eighteen people would need to
hold hands to form a circle
around its base

Age:

3,000
years



Older than
Rome's Colosseum
(1,940 years old)

Diameter at base:

12 metres



Wider than a London bus is long (11m)

Where on Earth is this?

There's a new hiking route that leads to the summit of this legendary mountain. But can you guess which peak it is?

TURN TO PAGE 26

SOMETHING TO DECLARE

In praise of the holiday jog: there's no better way to find your bearings in a new city

“ It was first thing on the first morning on my very first trip to New York City, so one might reasonably expect it to have involved a lie-in of sorts, followed, perhaps, by a visit to the brunch joint next door for that all-American experience: a wobbly stack of fat, syrup-doused and sugar-powdered pancakes.

But instead, awake early with a befuddled body clock, I slipped on my trainers and took to the streets of Manhattan, led by my phone's GPS past herds of commuters and bumper-to-bumper traffic towards the East River Park path that passes under Brooklyn Bridge.

It was a similar story on a disgustingly windy, rainy March morning in Copenhagen, when my friend and I set out from our hotel, shivering in our vest tops in the frigid air, for iconic Nyhavn, where the only people about were café owners propping up sandwich boards on the cobblestones for the day ahead.

In Lisbon, we discovered just a little too late that the streets are far too hilly for anyone to sensibly run on them – but run we did (after a fashion), puce and sweating, up and down the narrow streets with their painted tile walls. Sheets, hung from windows, billowed above.

Before the accusations of sanctimony reach my ears, let me defend myself thus: it's not about being healthy or staying trim. An athlete I am demonstrably not. That would require a focused self-application, whereas this, frankly, is all about impatience. If I walked instead of jogged, I'd either see half as much, or spend twice as long seeing it, and that's just inefficient. If running is what it takes to capitalise on limited time, so be it.

Like many, I like to absorb the geography of a city: where I am within it; how its parts fit together to form a whole. During warm-up stretching, I pinch and swipe on my digital map, hunting for patches of green, ribbons of blue, and the streets that connect them. Tiny lanes win out over main roads. I take mental note of possible detours to landmarks. Generally, I'll get a little bit lost at least once.





As wonderful as the landmarks often are, the best part is the normality of it all: nodding to grocers sweeping their doorsteps; sharing a smile with other joggers; passing parents and children on the school run. Delivery drivers, road sweepers, bin lorries: the familiar apparatus of a living place, oft-missed details that show us what really makes a city tick. Airbnb, with its 'belong anywhere' slogan, can eat its heart out: on a jog, unencumbered by the tourist's telltale bag, guidebook and meandering gait, I feel like a bone fide local.

With the morning jog done, my traveller impatience relents, leaving only one thing on my mind: breakfast. And let me tell you: a wobbly stack of fat pancakes never tasted so good.



JESSICA COLE is the magazine's acting features editor. Running is still the best excuse she can find to pig out when on holiday (or at home).



Bag for life

Forget the simple suitcase: this backpack is the smartest new kid on the luggage block. The #LiveFree backpack will hold your laptop, charge your smartphone and even whistle for you when it's lost. We're only disappointed that it can't make us a cuppa... yet.

● Available from November at knomo.com from £249, or if you can't wait, go to kickstarter.com and search for #LiveFree backpack.

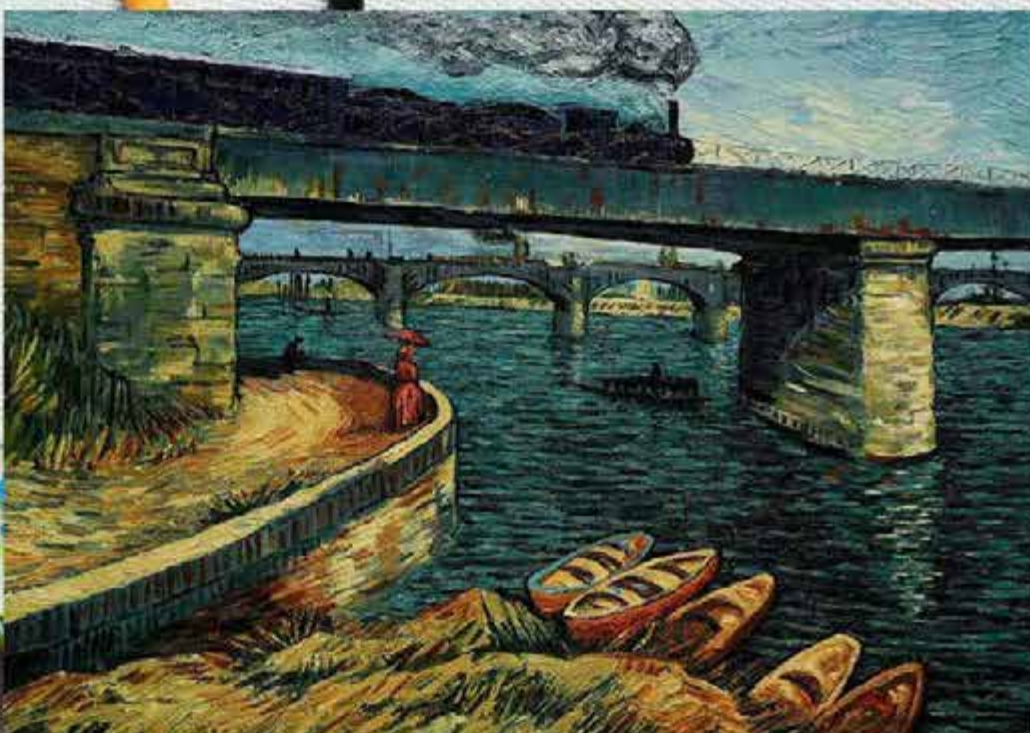


NEW FILM

Loving Vincent

Sometimes a film is praised for showing landscapes that 'look like something out of a painting'. *Loving Vincent* goes one further: its depictions of late 19th-century France are actual oil paintings. The film brings to life the world of Vincent van Gogh using animation in the artist's Post-Impressionist painting style. Each of the 65,000 frames was created by one of 125 professional artists from across the globe. *Loving Vincent* was first shot in live action before being hand-painted frame-by-frame to create an extraordinary viewing experience.

● *Loving Vincent*'s UK premiere is at the BFI London Film Festival (4–15 October).



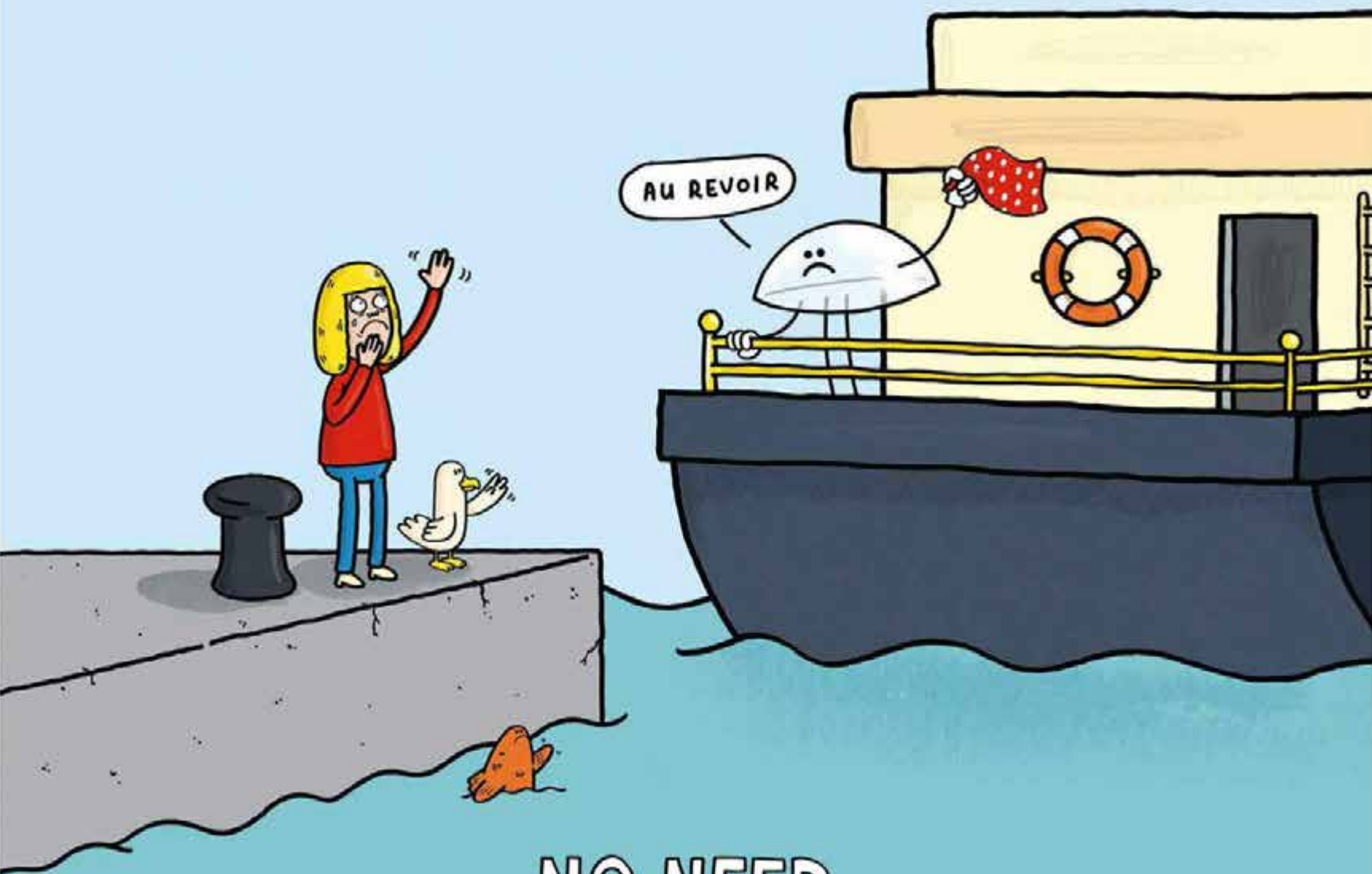
Festival of lights

'Tis the season for fireworks and feasting: this month, millions around the world will celebrate the five-day festival of Diwali. Here are some of the best places in the UK to join the celebrations.

● In Leicester, thousands of people of all faiths turn out to watch the switch-on of 6,000 twinkling lights along Belgrave Road's Golden Mile

● London's Trafalgar Square will host a live music and dance stage on 15 October, alongside street food, craft and henna art stalls

● In Northampton, the celebrations peak on Saturday 14 October with a lantern parade – featuring a five-metre-high mechanical elephant called Hariminder



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NEW FLIGHT NEXT STOP NASHVILLE

British Airways has announced new direct flights between London and Nashville from 4 May 2018. Here's a handful of reasons to head to Tennessee and check out Music City, USA.

Lollipops

LAS PALETAS

This popsicle shop is the brainchild of two Mexican sisters. Made with fresh ingredients, the lollies burst with flavours – like pineapple, chilli and tamarind. laspaletasnashville.com

Craft beer

HOP STOP

Nashville's craft beer boom has well and truly landed. Head east to Hop Stop for an ever-evolving selection of beers on tap and by the bottle – alongside hotdogs for the hungry. hopstop36.com

HATCH SHOW PRINT

This letterpress shop was founded way back in 1879. Today it still sells posters hot off the letterpress – but it also offers an art gallery and a workshop for hands-on printing fun. hatchshowprint.com

Galleries

Live music

ROBERT'S WESTERN WORLD

If Nashville is the mother of country music, Robert's Western World must be her beating heart. Come for live music seven days a week, a sizzling grill and cold beers a plenty. robertswesternworld.com

Best of the restaurants

BISCUIT LOVE

Forget the Kit Kat: we're talking Southern biscuits here. The scone-like baked goodies can be sweet or savoury – but all are delicious at Biscuit Love. Try the bonuts: morsels of fried dough served with lemon mascarpone. biscuitlove.com

5th AND TAYLOR

On the menu at this upscale restaurant are American staples like meatloaf, short ribs and beer can chicken – but not as you know them.

Elegant, refined, and paired with delicate flavours, there's not a soggy carrot in sight.

5thandtaylor.com

Wine

SALT & VINE

Move over, fusty old wine bars: at Salt & Vine, the bright, clean décor pairs beautifully with a selection of top-notch wines. Munch on hearty salads and snacks as you go. saltandvinenashville.com

Takeaway

PRINCE'S HOT CHICKEN SHACK

It's spicy, it's sizzling – and it's the real deal. Thornton Prince set up shop nearly 100 years ago, and today his shack still serves up finger-lickin' fried chicken. princeshotchicken.com

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Tuvalonely

FOR THOSE WHO LIKE to take the road less travelled, look no further than the tiny South Pacific island nation of Tuvalu – recently revealed as the least visited country out of all those measured by the World Tourism Organization. The tropical country, which received only 2,000 international tourists last year, has wonderful eccentricities, says Tony Wheeler, co-founder of Lonely Planet. 'When the flights come in to Funafuti half the town heads to the airport to see who's going to arrive or leave. It's Funafuti's biggest regular entertainment. In between flights people often take their bedding out and sleep on the runway at night: there's more of a breeze there.' Rising sea levels are putting this coral-lined paradise at risk – even more reason to see it while you can.

● lonelyplanet.com/tuvalu

**McSTINK**

Rotting meat, gym socks and even – excuse us – farts: the aroma of the tropical durian fruit has been likened to many unsavoury whiffs.

But that hasn't stopped McDonald's introducing a durian McFlurry in its Malaysian outlets – topped with slathers of the stinky fruit's pulp. Yum.

**BEST FOR BIKES**

Copenhagen is the best city in the world for cyclists, claims the local Copenhagenize index after weighing 14 factors (the same measures won Amsterdam top spot in past years). With more than 240 miles of cycle lanes and a bike hire scheme featuring GPS, puncture resistant tyres and locks, it's no wonder that the cycle culture has 'wheelie' caught on in Denmark's capital.

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ABTA



DÍA DE MUERTOS

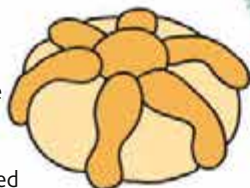
(DAY OF THE DEAD)

Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead) is more than just 'Mexican Halloween' – it's a vivid and strangely life-affirming mix of all the traditions that make up Mexico today. Get ready for some skull-inspired face-painting with our guide to the festival.



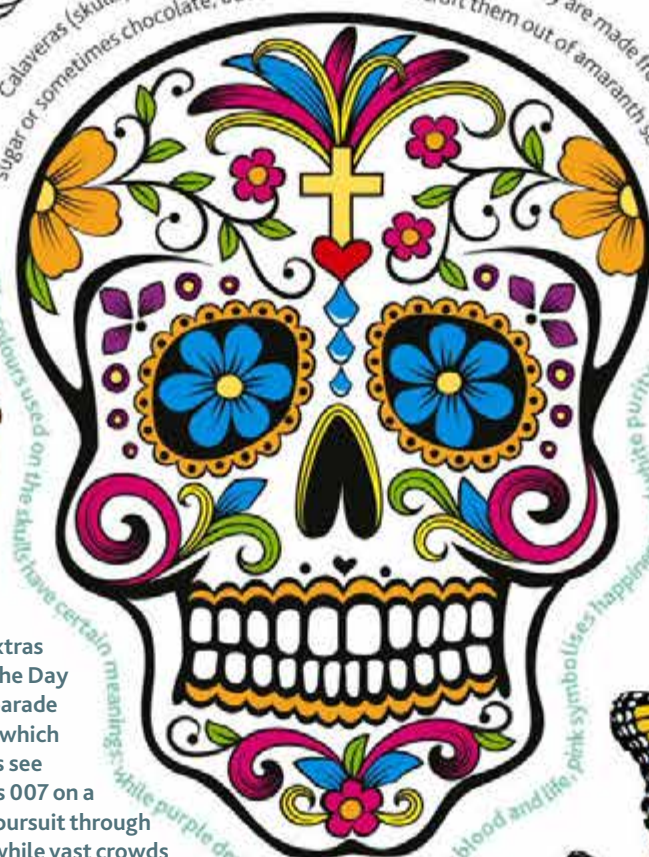
The cempasúchil, or Mexican marigold, is a symbol of the festival. One legend has it that an Aztec girl mourning for her lover killed in battle was turned into the flower by the sun god, while the warrior came back as a hummingbird.

One universal foodstuff at the festival is pan de muerto: this sugary pastry is topped by crossed strips resembling bones. Its round shape symbolises the cycle of life and death.



SUGAR SKULLS

Calaveras (skulls) are the hallmark of Día de Muertos. Today they are made from sugar or sometimes chocolate, but the Aztecs would craft them out of amaranth seeds.



The colours used on the skulls have certain meanings: white symbolises happiness, and white purity and hope. Pink symbolises life, red stands for blood and life, purple denotes grief, and blue denotes happiness.



Making an ofrenda ('offering') is at the heart of the domestic side of the festival. Altars to commemorate departed relatives feature calaveras, marigolds and candles, alongside the deceased's favourite kinds of food and drink – even bottles of tequila.

1500

Number of extras used to film the Day of the Dead parade in *Spectre*, in which cinema-goers see Daniel Craig's 007 on a high-octane pursuit through Mexico City while vast crowds in costume and giant skeleton-shaped floats thronged the streets.

1 Number of genuine Day of the Dead parades ever held in Mexico City. If the film looked too good to be true, indeed it was: the parade was an invention of the filmmakers. The following year, however, Mexican tourism authorities wondered whether they weren't missing the obvious, and put on an event rather like the one that Bond gate-crashed (minus the explosions).



The Day of the Dead coincides with the annual migration south to Mexico of millions of monarch butterflies. Aztecs believed they were the souls of ancestors returning to Earth for a brief visit each year.

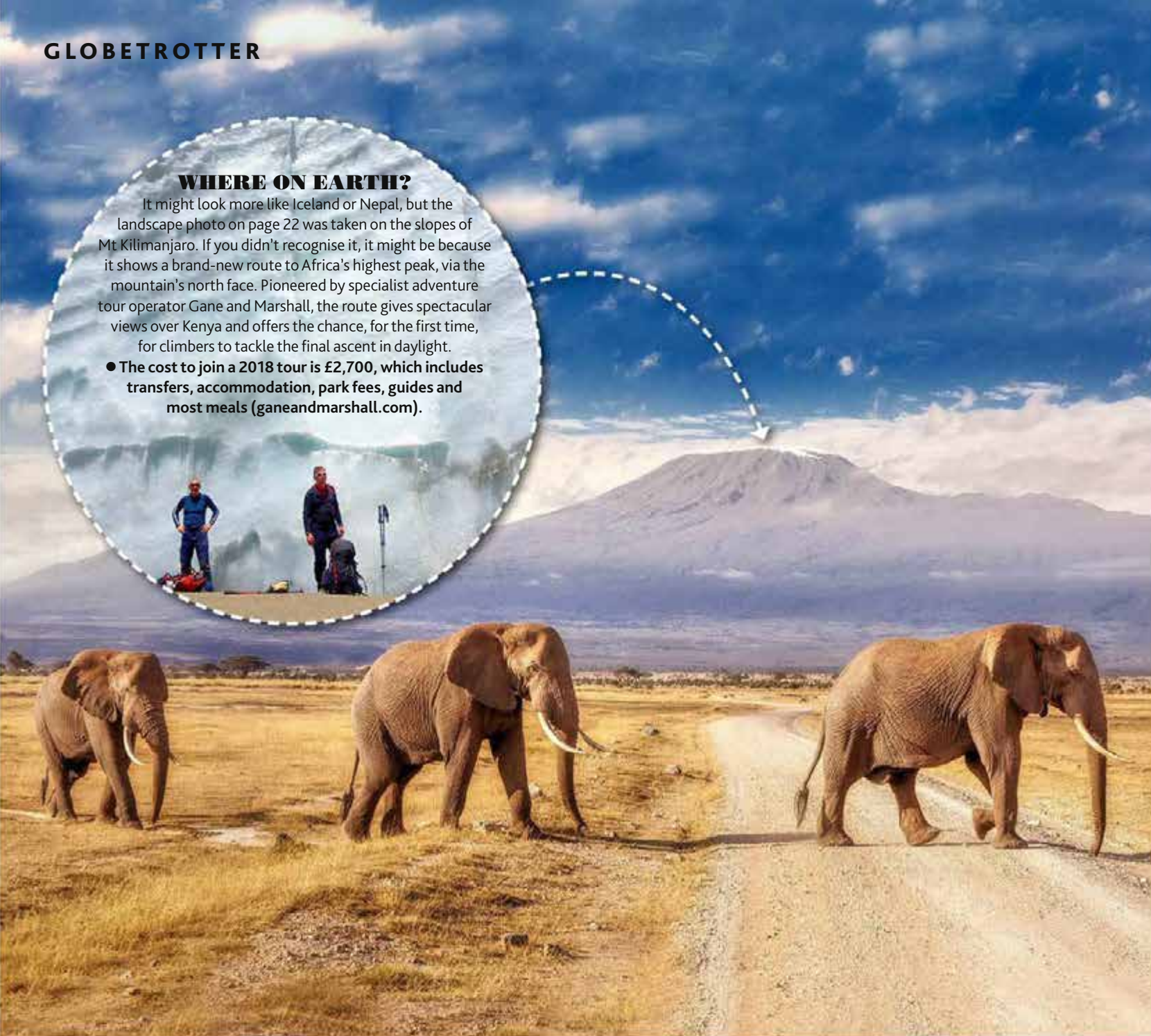
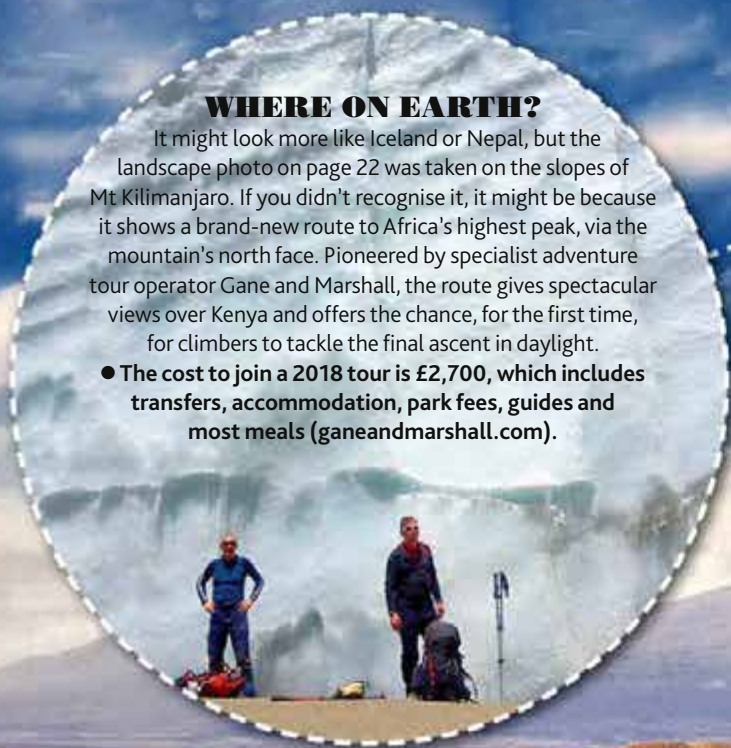


The main day for celebrations is 2 November, the day after All Saints' Day. Like Halloween the evening before that, Día de Muertos draws on pre-Christian end-of-harvest traditions.

WHERE ON EARTH?

It might look more like Iceland or Nepal, but the landscape photo on page 22 was taken on the slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro. If you didn't recognise it, it might be because it shows a brand-new route to Africa's highest peak, via the mountain's north face. Pioneered by specialist adventure tour operator Gane and Marshall, the route gives spectacular views over Kenya and offers the chance, for the first time, for climbers to tackle the final ascent in daylight.

- The cost to join a 2018 tour is £2,700, which includes transfers, accommodation, park fees, guides and most meals (ganeandmarshall.com).



SMARTPHOTO

Smartphone snappers may soon have a new weapon in their arsenal: Google has developed a program that makes photos look professional before users have taken them, by subtly editing the shot automatically on screen. Point-and-shoot never looked so good.



DOUBLE TAKE

Just when you thought selfie-takers wielding metal sticks in front of landmarks was as bad as it gets, the Nokia 8 smartphone goes and invents the bothie: a split screen shot using both front and rear cameras. We envisage tourist carnage as vloggers vie for an Instagram-perfect spot of the world's most beautiful views.

For daily travel news updates, visit lonelyplanet.com/news

PHOTOGRAPHS: GANE AND MARSHALL, JAMES FORSYTH/GETTY IMAGES, PHILIP LEE HARVEY, JOZEF POLC/ALAMY, CULTURA RM/ALAMY, EUGENE SERGEEV/ALAMY

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EATING *Estonia*

— COME HUNGRY —

Estonia's food scene is flourishing, thanks to the seasonal spoils of its forests and the generous bounties of the Baltic Sea. If you're planning a visit, come hungry



COME INTO SEASON

Estonia is an overwhelmingly rural country, with more than half its land covered with deep forest. It's hard not to feel close to nature here, and local life is in tune with the changing of the seasons – something the nation's chefs translate directly onto the dinner table.

For locals, it's always been natural to change your menu with the seasons. In summer, berries are collected from the countryside, while autumn is the season for vegetables such as turnips, cabbage and beetroot, as well as grains and mushrooms. Winter larders are packed with pickled and smoked treats, preserved to last through the long, cold nights ahead. A particular delicacy is sprats – small fish similar to herring – which come marinated in a mixture of pepper, coriander seeds, salt and sugar, in a dish called vürtsikilu. Try it served in a black bread sandwich for an authentic local lunch.

Today, a new wave of chefs honour Estonia's traditions in fresh and exciting ways. Restoran Õ is a quiet restaurant not far from Tallinn's picturesque Old Town where chefs serve up plates inspired by the flavours of Estonia and its Baltic and Nordic neighbours. The emphasis is on quality local ingredients, simply prepared. Menus are rarely the same from week to week, but they're always delicious. Book ahead to guarantee a table.

THE DAILY BREAD

Not for nothing do Estonian grandparents tell their children: 'Respect the bread – it's older than you!' For centuries, homemade black and sourdough rye bread formed the backbone of the Estonian diet, and it was especially important during the Nazi and Soviet occupations. It's just as popular today, and best enjoyed with a few slices of smoked

cheese. For the finest bread in the capital, Tallinn, head to Kalamaja Pagarikoda, where the locals buy their morning loaf.

SOMETHING TO DRINK

In recent years, Estonia's craft beer scene has exploded, with a new generation of brewers offering a fresh take on traditional flavours. At Hiiu Brewery, on the western island of Hiiu, you can sample these new brews while learning about the traditional production methods and beer culture that have informed it. If you're only visiting Tallinn, head to the Pudel Baar or the Põrgu Beer Cellar, both of which serve up a range of local beers. The capital also has its own drink: Vana Tallinn, a syrupy rum-based liqueur flavoured with deep notes of citrus and cinnamon. Locals like to sip it after a meal or add it to their coffee for an Estonian twist on the Irish classic. For something a little lighter, try kali, a non-alcoholic drink made from fermented bread, with a taste that's reminiscent of root beer.

FESTIVE FUN

Estonia comes alive at Christmas, as markets pop up in town squares and parks across the country. This far north, the nights begin early and can be chilly, so it's a good idea to fill up on some hearty Estonian food to see you through the cold. Seasonal favourites include blood pudding, sauerkraut and hot mulled wine, as well as warming gingerbread cookies known as piparkoogid, or pepper cakes.

The biggest Christmas market sets up each December in Tallinn's Old Town. Here you can pick up hand-crafted gifts and foods, dance under the stars to performances by local singers and even pay a visit to Santa Claus, who brings his own reindeer along.

GETTING THERE

British Airways flies twice weekly from London Heathrow to Tallinn. Book with British Airways Holidays and enjoy a three-night city break for November travel from just £169pp. T&Cs apply. Price correct at time of going to print*.

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*Travelling between 1 and 30 November 2017. Book by 31 October.



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For more information and full terms and conditions please visit uk.jal.com. Visit seejapan.co.uk for tourist information by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO).

Easy Trips

THIS MONTH... go truffle-hunting in **Croatia**, join a ghostly procession in **New York**, enjoy a craft-beer session in **Newcastle** and explore **Portugal's** most remote beach

ISTRIA, CROATIA

A truffling matter

For much of the year, the leafy forests of Istria lie quiet and undisturbed by the footfall of man or beast. Come autumn, however, they're beset by a minor stampede, as men and sniffer dogs make for the countryside in search of truffles – a seasonal gold rush which sees some rare varieties fetching as much as £5,000 per kilo at auction. To go looking for these formidable fungi yourself, head to the countryside along the Slovenian border, home to sleepy hilltop towns ringed by crumbling battlements, cypress trees and freshly harvested vineyards. Some villages such as Livade host truffle festivals – prize-winning specimens are put on show and auctioned, with lesser truffles often finding a home in pasta dishes in local restaurants.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- ❶ The closest airport to Livade is Pula. Most flights from the UK are summer-only, but easyJet continues to fly from Gatwick (from £80; easyjet.com), and there are services with Jet2 and Ryanair. From Pula it's just over an hour's drive north to Livade (car hire from £15 p/day; sixt.com).
- ❷ The Tuberfest truffle festival takes place 21–22 October in Livade (free; coloursofistria.com).
- ❸ Hotel Kaštel occupies a 17th-century Italianate palazzo in nearby Motovun, with truffle-heavy dishes in the on-site restaurant (from £85; hotel-kastel-motovun.hr).

OUR OFFERS

Look out for special Easy Trips offers. We do not arrange these offers in exchange for positive coverage



EGERTON, KENT

Autumn on the menu

Idyllic village location: check. Plenty of space to huddle round the fire: check. A commitment to locally sourced food and drink: check. Eminently comfy rooms with massive beds to collapse in after mass consumption: check. The Barrow House, which opened earlier this year, comes into its own at this time of year, with all the ingredients required for a top autumn pub stay. Dane and Sarah Allchorne, who own the highly popular Milk House a few miles down the road, have been careful to keep the characterful bones of the old pub, with its white weatherboard exterior retained, the 16th-century timbers salvaged from old sailing ships on view in the dining room and the twin bedroom upstairs, and the names of Canadian airmen based nearby during WWII etched above the fireplace. The autumn menu, using produce drawn from a 20-mile radius, is now available, and includes such warming dishes as wood pigeon and smoked mash, and mushroom ragout on toast.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The Bowl room; antlers and exposed brick in the restaurant; the weatherboarded pub's origins go back to 1576; cured pork collar and blue cheese, with rocket, apple and rapeseed oil

MAKE IT HAPPEN

📍 There are three rooms at the Barrow House, two doubles and a twin (from £80; thebarrowhouse.co.uk). The kitchen's autumn menu is now available, with mains starting at £9 and rising to £25 for ribeye steak. There's live music in the pub every other Friday to the end of the year. **🚗** The inn is in Egerton, Kent, with access from the M20. The nearest train station is in Pluckley, with services from Ramsgate, Canterbury, Dover and London amongst others (southeasternrailway.co.uk). **🍏** The National Apple Festival, with orchard tours, live music and apple competitions aplenty, takes place 14–15 October in the village of Brogdale (applefestivalkent.co.uk).

PHOTOGRAPH: THEGOODLY/GETTY IMAGES



5 ways to celebrate this Halloween

Join a spooky parade

There's something strange in the neighbourhood when zombies, corpse-brides and warlocks march along Manhattan's Sixth Avenue as part of the Village Halloween Parade. If you want to take part you'll need to wear appropriately spooky attire – otherwise you can watch aghast from the sidelines (free; 31 October; halloween-nyc.com).

Spend the night in a haunted house

If New York feels too far away, try old York. One of its most poltergeist-dense corners is the aptly named 'Haunted Chamber' – a 650-year-old apartment where mortal residents hunker down amid four-poster beds and Persian rugs (from £110 with a two-night minimum stay; tremblingmadness.co.uk).

Descend into the Parisian underworld


The resting place of six million Parisians, the Catacombs were created in the 1780s when the cemeteries of the French capital began to overflow, and various bones were transferred to subterranean quarries instead. There can be few places scarier to spend Halloween than darkened tunnels lined with countless skulls (from £12; catacombes.paris.fr).

Visit the Bram Stoker Festival

Dublin stakes its claim to literary immortality with the annual Bram Stoker Festival. This year, visitors can sink their teeth into a number of events: a dance interpretation of Dracula and screenings of vampire movies in St Patrick's Cathedral count among them (events from £13; 27–30 October; bramstokerfestival.com).

Watch horror films in a London ballroom

Expect cinema-goers to be smashing down the doors of London's Rivoli Ballroom as it stages horror film screenings in the run-up to Halloween. Among the chilling offerings at this 1950s-vintage venue is *The Shining*, a movie notable for its own ghostly ballroom scene (tickets from £13; 23–31 October; rivoliballroom.com).



Ribbleshead Viaduct was built in the 1870s for the Settle-Carlisle Railway, at the cost of hundreds of construction workers' lives

YORKSHIRE. ENGLAND

Settle in the Dales

At no time of year is God's Own Country more heavenly than autumn, with golden bracken, falling leaves and no shortage of pubs in which to warm soggy boots by the fireside – especially around the Yorkshire Dales National Park. HF Holidays offers self-guided walking holidays out of 19th-century Newfield Hall – a spot ideally placed for attempts on the blustery summits of Pen-y-Ghent and Ingleborough, or an amble beneath the mighty arches of the Ribbleshead Viaduct on the Settle-Carlisle Railway.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- ① HF Holidays offers one- to seven-night self-guided walking holidays from Newfield Hall, with detailed maps and routes made available to guests. Spacious rooms are divided between the main house and the stables (one night from £85pp; hfholidays.co.uk).
- ① The closest main railway station is Skipton, served by direct trains from London King's Cross and Leeds (£16; northernrailway.co.uk). HF Holidays runs a shuttle bus to Newfield Hall, taking roughly 15 minutes (£10).

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID & MICHA SHELDON/RADIUS/SUPERSTOCK, DINNER TIME STORY

LONDON, ENGLAND



Virtual Little Chef

If the drama of an open-plan restaurant kitchen isn't quite immersive enough, how about watching a two-inch-high chef attack a giant octopus, build a snowman made of ice-cream and chop up broccoli with a tiny chainsaw on the tablecloth in front of you? It's a gastronomic performance people will soon be able to experience as 'Dinner Time Story' comes to London – a pop-up dining experience where *Masterchef* meets *Minority Report*. Customers witness a 3D-animated chef projected onto their tables, 'preparing' the dish before their eyes. Fire breathing dragons, flocks of birds and speedboats all form part of the virtual theatrics – the food that gets served is reassuringly real.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- ☆ Dinner Time Story launches 18 October on Kingsland Road, and runs to January 2018 (£90pp; lepetitchef-shop.com).
- 📍 Old Street is the nearest tube station, served by the Northern Line (tfl.gov.uk).
- 🏠 The Hoxton has small, stylish rooms close to Kingsland Road (from £119; thehoxton.com).



NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE, ENGLAND

ALE'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

Newcastle's penchant for brown ales has been well documented – less well known is the city's love of blonde ales, amber ales, coppery red ales and murky black stouts and porters. All shades of beer will be in attendance at Craft Beer Calling – a festival taking place in a temple-like structure originally built for the 1929 North East Coast Exhibition, with taps representing Sweden, Denmark, Spain and northern England. Be sure to sample beers from the Wylan Brewery – the hosts of the event.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

- 📍 Craft Beer Calling takes place at the Palace of Arts in Newcastle's Exhibition Park from 26–28 October (one-day pass from £8, three-day pass from £30; craftbeercalling.com).
- 📍 Newcastle is served by direct rail connections from London King's Cross (from £48; virgintrainseastcoast.com), Manchester, Edinburgh and Leeds (from £21; tpeexpress.co.uk).
- 🏠 Jesmond Dene House occupies a Victorian mansion outside the city centre. Interiors feature wood panelling, grand fireplaces and bay windows (from £109; jesmonddenehouse.co.uk).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The Barbastelle tent from inside; and from outside; cooking breakfast; a deer with a vegetation problem; a guest lounge at the 'Go-Down'



FREE WINE

Quote 'LP2017' in the 'requests' box when booking online (or quote it over the phone) to receive a free bottle of wine for stays booked before 24 December 2017.



WEST SUSSEX, ENGLAND

Roaming in the gloaming

Little-known fact: one of the biggest rewilding projects in Europe can be found just over an hour from London. For 15 years, the 3,500-acre Knepp estate has essentially been left to its own devices, with pigs, deer, cattle and ponies free to graze the woodlands and meadows as they wish. The project has been so successful that human beings are now back in the equation – purely as observers, mind. Knepp Wildland Safaris runs tours through the park; with the woods echoing to the sound of clashing antlers as deer embark on their annual rut, October is a grand time to visit. Get closer to Knepp's four-legged inhabitants by booking into one of its luxury glamping sites for the night, before they shut for the winter. Our pick is Barbastelle, a large bell tent in a quiet copse of oaks, with lanterns, fire-pits and blankets aplenty to ward off the chill of an autumn evening. Other options on the site are three shepherds' huts, which come with wood-burning stoves, and a variety of yurts and tipis, each sleeping two adults. All glampers have access to a snug, stove-lit barn, with local produce and booze on sale, including Knepp's own sausages and venison; a characterful open-air kitchen and dining space made from reclaimed wood; and, for the hardy, the grandly-titled Bathenon, an outdoor bath-house open to the elements. (Indoor showers also available if the mere thought sends a shiver down the spine.)

MAKE IT HAPPEN

I Knepp Wildland Safaris runs guided safaris, walks and courses to the end of the October, and again from April; the estate's public footpaths are open year-round. Half-day guided safaris cost from £35 per person (kneppsafaris.co.uk).

I Book a stay in one of Knepp's nine bell tents, yurts, tipis or shepherd's huts from £132 for two nights (canopyandstars.co.uk). Canopy and Stars has plenty of unusual properties throughout Sussex if you plan a visit over winter.

I The park entrance is in the village of Dial Post. The nearest station is at Horsham, eight miles away, with services from London Victoria or London Bridge (from £33; southernrailway.com), and also Portsmouth and Southampton.

PHOTOGRAPH: HOLGER LEUE/GETTY IMAGES

Near the western end of Porto Santo's long beach, looking towards Ilhéu da Cal – an uninhabited island just offshore

PORTO SANTO, PORTUGAL

Port in a storm

Discovered in the 15th century by Portuguese sailors lost in a violent storm, Porto Santo is a tiny, arid volcanic island in the seas northeast of Madeira, home to just 5,500 souls.

Today it remains a place of sanctuary for those seeking respite from miserable weather – especially in the autumn, when

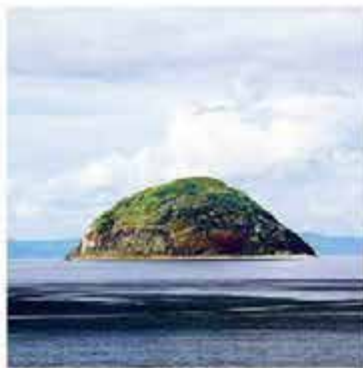
temperatures cling on to the mid-20s long after the summer crowds have dispersed. Its biggest draw is its beach – admittedly, it's the only significant one on the island, but it compensates by measuring five miles long, meaning there are often swathes of fine coral sand untouched by human footprints. Having ranged Porto Santo's shores, ascend to Pico Castelo – the peak to which islanders once rallied when they were threatened by pirate raids. Pirates are scarce these days, but the summit still affords panoramic views across the rolling swells of the Atlantic to Madeira.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

✈ TAP Portugal is the only airline offering year-round connections to Porto Santo from the UK, with flights from Gatwick, Heathrow and Manchester, changing at Lisbon (from £200; flytap.com).

📖 For more on Porto Santo, see visitmadeira.pt and porto-santo.com, the latter including details on the route up to Pico Castelo.

🏠 Stay at Hotel Quinta do Serrado, a basalt-built hotel set in landscaped gardens (from £50; book through porto-santo.com).



REVIEW OF THE MONTH

AYRSHIRE, SCOTLAND

Glenapp Castle

WHY NOW?

The season of 'mists and mellow fruitfulness' is a magical time to visit Scotland's southwest coast, with the low sun casting a glow over a patchwork landscape of russet- and amber-leaved forests.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

Glenapp Castle appears at the end of a tree-lined drive, like a grand house in a Gothic novel. Built in the 19th century in Scottish Baronial style, with crenellated towers and cone-shaped turrets, it sets the stage for an atmospheric autumn getaway. Padded jackets and wellington boots of all shapes and sizes can be found by the main door, encouraging you to explore the estate's gardens and secluded woodland trails. After a bracing stroll, we settled down with the papers and a scrumptious cream tea.

WHAT'S MY ROOM LIKE?

The 20 rooms are spread across three floors, and each is unique but traditional in style, with high ceilings and period furnishings. Many have sea views, looking out over the the Firth of Clyde and its mysterious uninhabited island, Ailsa Craig. If you're here on a special occasion, book one of the two master suites. These have huge windows, a fireplace and our favourite feature – secret access through the turrets down to the gardens below.

WHAT AM I EATING?

We bagged a spot by the sitting room fire for a pre-dinner snifter and canapés, before enjoying a candle-lit six-course tasting menu

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Ailsa Craig, the volcanic outcrop, where blue hone granite is quarried to make curling stones, now a bird sanctuary home to gannets and puffins; roast fillet of aged Scotch beef with white onion puree and a truffle scented jus; a Grand Garden view room; an aerial view of the castle and grounds looking out to the Firth of Clyde and beyond; afternoon tea in the library

in the elegant dining room. You'll find such local delights as roast crown of Burn Castle Grouse with haggis bonbon or grilled fillet of Loch Duart salmon with baby leeks on the autumn menu. The restaurant's produce is all sourced from nearby Ayrshire farms, and the greens are pulled from the castle gardens.

WHAT'S IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD?

We unashamedly wiled away almost an entire weekend without leaving the castle grounds but there's plenty to do in the area, from shooting, archery and mountain biking to hiking and sky-gazing at the nearby Galloway Forest Park. Glenapp can also provide an astronomer for a night-sky tour. If sea fishing is more your style, the hotel boat can be chartered for trips out into the Firth of Clyde.

GOOD TO KNOW

Travelling from the south, we opted for a relaxed trundle up to Glasgow on the Caledonian Sleeper train, arriving in time for breakfast at 7:20am (from £140 for a cabin; sleeper.scot). BA, easyJet and Flybe fly to Glasgow from various UK cities. The Castle is just under two hours from Glasgow, so a car is handy. Pick-up can also be pre-arranged with the hotel (£145 each way).

WHAT'S THE DAMAGE?

Doubles start at £209. The Master Suites cost from £421 per night (glenappcastle.com). A three-course dinner menu is £45 per person, while the six-course menu is £65.

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VIEWS • OF • TURKEY

Snow-capped monasteries hanging off sheer rock faces, undulating tea fields and aquamarine lakes speak of many different corners of the world, but in Turkey, they can all be found in one place: the Black Sea Region

RUN FOR THE HILLS

Far away from the hum of Istanbul and the sun-beaten Mediterranean coastlines is Turkey's Black Sea Region. Instead of thronging market squares or shimmering azure seas, here you'll find dustings of snow on moody grey cliffs, deep green tea fields and autumnal shades of

auburn and amber in the region's hilly forests.

The cosmopolitan cities of Trabzon and Rize lie on the coast, and make for absorbing destinations in themselves. Use them as a springboard for the hills and mountains to their south, however, and you'll witness a captivating, little-seen side to Turkey.



Trabzon

Still the Black Sea's busiest port, Trabzon has a history best described as changeable. Because of its position on the historic Silk Road, it has been passed from civilisation to civilisation – including Cimmerians, Byzantines and notably the Ottoman Empire. As a consequence, its religious architecture is eclectic – and all the more interesting for it.

Among Trabzon's most celebrated mosques is the Aya Sofya, around two miles from the city centre. It was built between 1238 and 1263, and its design mixes Georgian and Seljuk influences, but you'll find several Constantinople-style wall paintings and mosaics to marvel at inside.

Trabzon's real ace card is the Sumela Monastery (above left), a one-hour bus ride away.

It perilously hugs a steep cliff within Altındere National Park, overlooking dense evergreen forests and a powerful mountain stream. The monastery reopens next year after renovations.

Whether you trek all the way from the park's entrance or just from the ticket office car park, the walk there is not for the faint-hearted. One of many rewards is the monastery's church, formed from a natural cave and filled with frescoes, some of which date back to the 9th century. Sumela is a vision at any time of year, but with a winter's dose of snow it resembles a still straight out of Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, and is a unique experience.



THE UNIFORM ROWS OF TEA, OR 'ÇAY' PLANTS, RIPPLE ALONG THE LANDSCAPE

Rize

Aside from being the childhood home of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the modern city of Rize is actually known for something more earthy: tea. Among its best low-lying attractions is the Şeyh Camii mosque and its towering minarets, but an even greater spectacle lies outside the city centre. Rize's skyline to the south is dominated by tumbling green hills featuring several large tea fields. The uniform rows of tea, or 'çay' plants, ripple along the landscape, making for an enticing view (opposite). If you want to sample the local produce, make for one of Rize's many tea gardens, some of which are less than a half hour's walk up the hill away from the city. Lounge among palm trees and cactuses as you sip your çay, with a view down the slopes towards the city and the Black Sea. You can also learn about how the tea is harvested (below left) and manufactured in the hillside factories.



FIND OUT MORE AT
HOMETURKEY.COM

Artvin

Close to the Georgian border to the north, the modest province of Artvin serves as a perfect base camp for your exploration into the spectacular surrounding mountainous countryside. To the west are the Eastern Kaçkars (above right), a mountain range ripe for hiking, accessible from the provincial town of Yusufeli, and peppered with luminous blue crater lakes (above middle). To the east are myriad forests and yet more beautifully still lakes, perhaps the best of which is Borçka Karagöl (below right), surrounded as it is by eye-catching flora, which changes colour with the season.



A taste of Turkey

If you're planning a full day's trekking, set yourself up for it with the rich and indulgent mihlamlama, or kuymak as it's known in Trabzon. It comprises cornmeal cooked in Black Sea butter and cheese, and is a hearty staple for a region full of mountaineers.





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Great Escape

EASTERN ICELAND

Uncover the beauty of Iceland's most hidden corners, beginning in the remote arts and crafts community of **Seyðisfjörður**, before tracking trolls in the mountains of **Borgarfjörður Eystri**. Next, take a boat trip across an iceberg-filled lake at **Jökulsárlón**, then climb a glacier in **Vatnajökull National Park**.

WORDS MIKE MACEACHERAN [@MikeMacEacheran](#) • PHOTOGRAPHS MATT MUNRO [@mattmunrophotos](#)

A fishing boat lies at anchor in the village of Djúpivogur



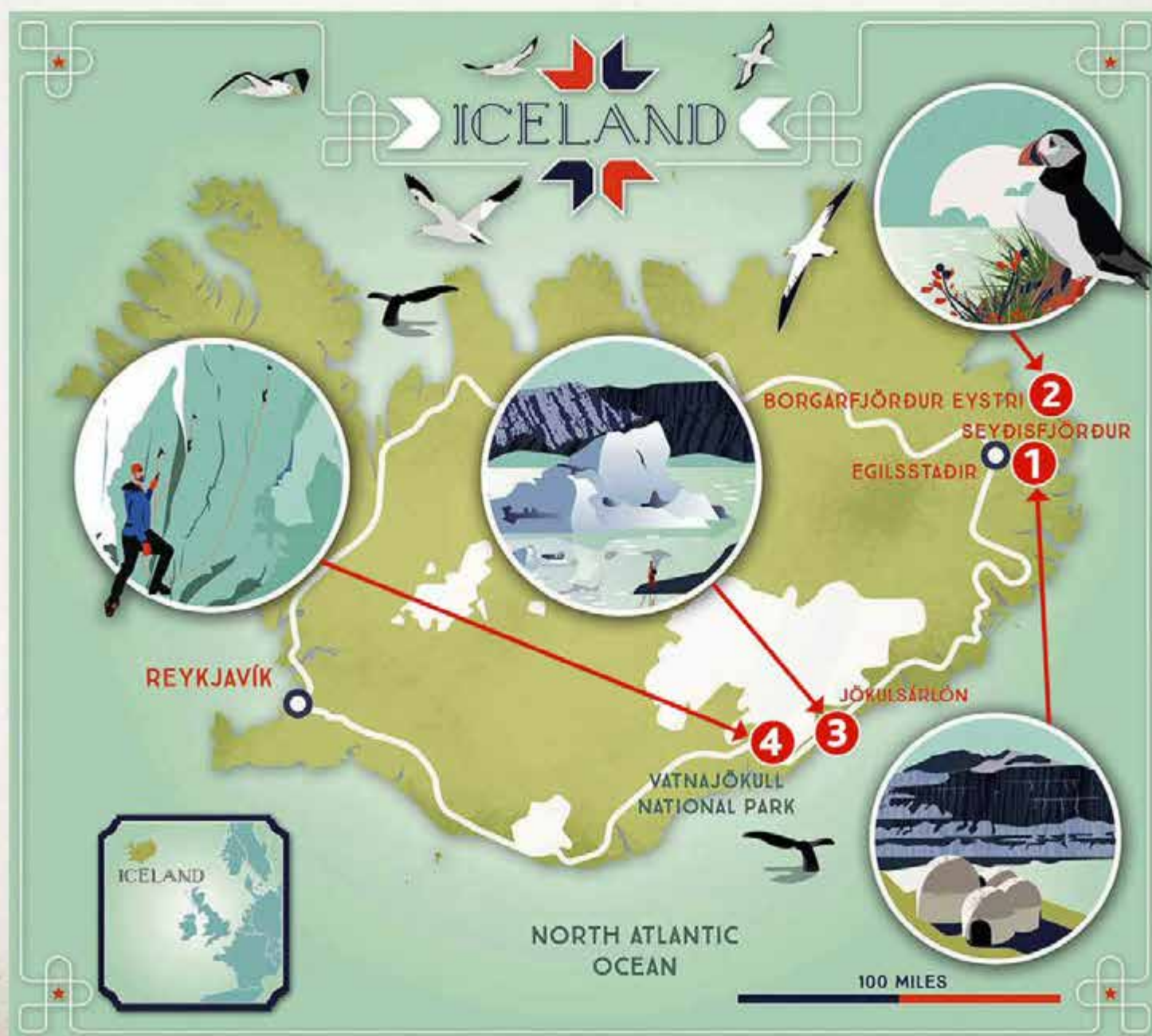
Plan your trip

1 Discover Iceland's most creative arts and crafts hub in **Seyðisfjörður**, a small former fishing community (p48).

2 Seek out elves and trolls, and possibly even a sea monster, in the mountains of **Borgarfjörður Eystri** (p50).

3 Hop in a Zodiac for a bucket-list trip across **Jökulsárlón lagoon**, a wilderness of ice caps, black sand beaches and seals (p52).

4 Glacier hikes and ice climbs await in **Vatnajökull National Park**, home to Europe's largest ice sheet (p54).



MAP ILLUSTRATION: ALEX VERHILLE. PHOTOGRAPHS: VETTER CARDOZO/ALAMY, STEPHEN J. COHEN/GETTY, AF ARCHIVE/ALAMY, DEREPENTE/ISTOCK/GETTY, JONATHAN GREGSON



HOW TO GET THERE

Egilsstaðir Airport is the most useful entry point for this trip, with Discover the World offering return charter flights from London Gatwick on a seasonal basis. With most carriers, you're looking at flying into Keflavík International Airport, Iceland's main international hub, before transferring to Reykjavík Airport near the city centre (1hr by bus). Icelandair, easyJet, WOW air and British Airways fly direct to Keflavík (from £69 return; ba.com), with the onward internal flight to Egilsstaðir available with Air Iceland Connect (from £119 return; airicelandconnect.com).

HOW TO GET AROUND

Public transport is limited, so our suggestion for this itinerary is to hire a rental car in Egilsstaðir. Expect to pay upwards of £350 per week (europcar.co.uk). Unlike most European countries, Iceland's roads are rudimentary and tarmac sometimes turns to gravel when you least expect it, but all cars are insured to drive these roads. If you plan to detour into the country's mountainous centre, you'll need a 4WD.

HOW LONG TO SPEND

Iceland is one of those countries that makes you wish you'd planned to stay for longer, and there are so many detours off Route 1 it's hard not to get distracted. With that in mind, it's possible to complete this route in just six days, but that would be an unnecessary rush. Consider 10 days to allow more time for activities such as hiking, biking, birdwatching, and – perhaps – a boozy night or two getting to know the locals.

WHAT TO BUDGET

There is no getting away from it: Iceland is expensive, even by European standards, and budget travellers would do well to get by on as little as £150 a day by staying in hostels and stocking up at the supermarket. Expect to pay around

£120 per night for mid-range accommodation and around £25–£30 for a main course for lunch or dinner.

WHEN TO GO

For the welcome bonus of a dazzling midnight sun and lingering skies over the mountains, any time from late April to early October is highly recommended. November to March is equally alluring, especially given the arrival of the northern lights. Iceland's weather is unpredictable; the east coast skies can be clear and sunny one minute, thunderous and apocalyptic the next. A waterproof, hat and sturdy shoes are a must.

WHO CAN HELP

Discover the World's 14-night East Fjords and South Coast fly-drive, including accommodation, one-way domestic flight from Reykjavík to Egilsstaðir and car rental, costs from £2,667 per person (discover-the-world.co.uk). The UK tour operator can organise everything from guided hikes to ice-climbing trips and provides a seamless point-to-point programme from start to finish. As a welcome extra, it offers 24-hour assistance in London and provides you with a fully-updated iPad, consisting of invaluable tips and point-and-click recommendations for the journey ahead.

HOW TO PLAN

For inspiration, the official tourism website for Iceland is a great place to start (inspiredbyiceland.com). Pick up our *Iceland* guide (£15.99) or download individual chapters from lonelyplanet.com (from £2.99 each).



ON THE ROAD

Eat

Cod and chips. The UK may do it well, but Iceland arguably does it better. The east coast's ubiquitous dish is sold at restaurants, cafés and even petrol stations.



Drink

Craft beer. The Vikings considered mead sacred, but it's hoppy IPAs that are enjoying a boom. In Seyðisfjörður, try an El Grillo, named after a British tanker sunk in the bay during WWII.



Listen to

Sigur Rós. Creating a feeling as intense as any midnight sun, the Reykjavík band's atmospheric falsetto and bowstring guitars are made for an Icelandic road trip.



Watch

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty (to see Ben Stiller longboard into Seyðisfjörður), *Die Another Day* (for 007 driving an Aston Martin across Jökulsárlón's lagoon), or *Batman Begins* (to see a sword fight at the foot of Vatnajökull National Park's glacier).



Buy

A patterned wool jumper. Typically, one will cost upwards of £170, but then this is no ordinary wool: it's naturally waterproof, flame retardant and self-cleaning.



Try it once

Hákarl, or fermented shark. It's a national dish and popular delicacy in Iceland, but tastes more like an exceptionally whiffy blue cheese. One bite is often more than enough, so proceed with caution.





**THE SHOT**

Photographer Matt Munro on capturing Jökulsárlón lagoon

'The day before I took this shot, we'd arrived at the lagoon only to find the fog so thick that we could barely see our hands in front of our faces. But the forecast promised an imminent window in the weather, so we got up early the next day and headed to the southern side of the lagoon, walked up and along a rise and looked back – to see this beautiful, wild view. There wasn't a breath of wind, so the reflection of the mountains and icebergs in the lagoons was perfect and I was struck by the enormity of it all. I love the landscape's symmetry, the triangles going off at different angles, and the sense of scale provided by the figure by the waterside.'

Shot on a Canon EOS 5D Mark II // 70–200mm lens // ISO 100 // aperture f/8 // shutter speed 1/250

Black sands, craggy mountainsides and huge, hulking icebergs: Jökulsárlón lagoon delivers an eerie, otherworldly beauty



Seyðisfjörður's colourful Norwegian-style buildings make it one of Iceland's most unique towns

1. Seyðisfjörður

Embrace the fjord's rich and colourful marine history, then discover its new role as an unlikely hub for Icelandic arts and crafts

IT'S A COOL, BREEZY DAY, the salt-tanged waft of the Norwegian Sea blowing in from the northeast, and Seyðisfjörður is deceptively calm. Sheep doze and eider ducks nest, with one eye on the fishing boats deep in the channel trawling for cod. In the village, a few people shop for lambswool knits, while others walk the curved seafront, admiring the natural splendour of the arrow-headed mountains cradling the harbour. Behind them stands a sky-blue timber church, creaky and welcoming, yet empty inside.

The answer why it's so quiet can be found at Skaftfell, a centre for visual art that's become ground zero for this improbable crafts community at the edge of the Arctic. Rather than fish the antler-shaped fjord as their ancestors once did, locals have embraced the arts and can be found sketching, sculpting and stitching in former boathouses repurposed as workshops. Everyone is part-time painter or entrepreneur and every conversation mentions LungA, the annual international arts festival held in July.

'This isn't a normal Icelandic town,' says clothes designer and Skaftfell regular Philippe Clause, who runs knitwear startup Esualc. 'Fishing villages are dying out, but Seyðisfjörður is reversing that trend. I work with needles to create elvish pointed hoods and woven cowls, but some use scrap or reindeer hides. Together we

wanted to create something more organic and independent here – and it's had a huge snowball effect.'

Seyðisfjörður has always been a world apart from the rest of Iceland. Cut off by the Fjarðarheiði mountain pass, and located some 17 miles from the Ring Road (one of Europe's most extraordinary driving routes) the village has long looked outwards for inspiration. Days were once

measured by shipping forecasts, and in the 1800s Norwegian sailors docked while fishing for cod, leaving behind a heritage of brightly painted wooden houses and red-roofed farms. Ask a local and they'll say they still rely more on the ferries connecting the inlet to the Faroe Islands and Denmark than the road to Reykjavík.

Across town on a hillside bluff, Skaftfell alumni and conceptual designers Hanna Sigurkarlsdóttir and Litten Nystrom of art collective RoShamBo are gazing at the fjord's widescreen panorama in the evening's afterglow. Framing the view is Tvisöngur sound sculpture, a series of inter-connected concrete igloos by German artist Lukas Kühne. Created in tribute to Iceland's long singing tradition, it acts as a giant megaphone, encouraging local musicians to use the artwork as a rehearsal space.

'It gathers together sound and song, much like Seyðisfjörður brings artists together,' says Hanna, listening as her words reverberate around the structure. 'The village is open-minded, there are no taboos or assumptions, and there's an acceptance of creativity. Maybe it's too much fresh air, but locals here think they can do everything.'

A spectacular 90-minute drive northeast along Route 94 takes you past spouting waterfalls and across a glacial river delta onto the gravel road to Borgarfjörður Eystri. ➡

Essentials

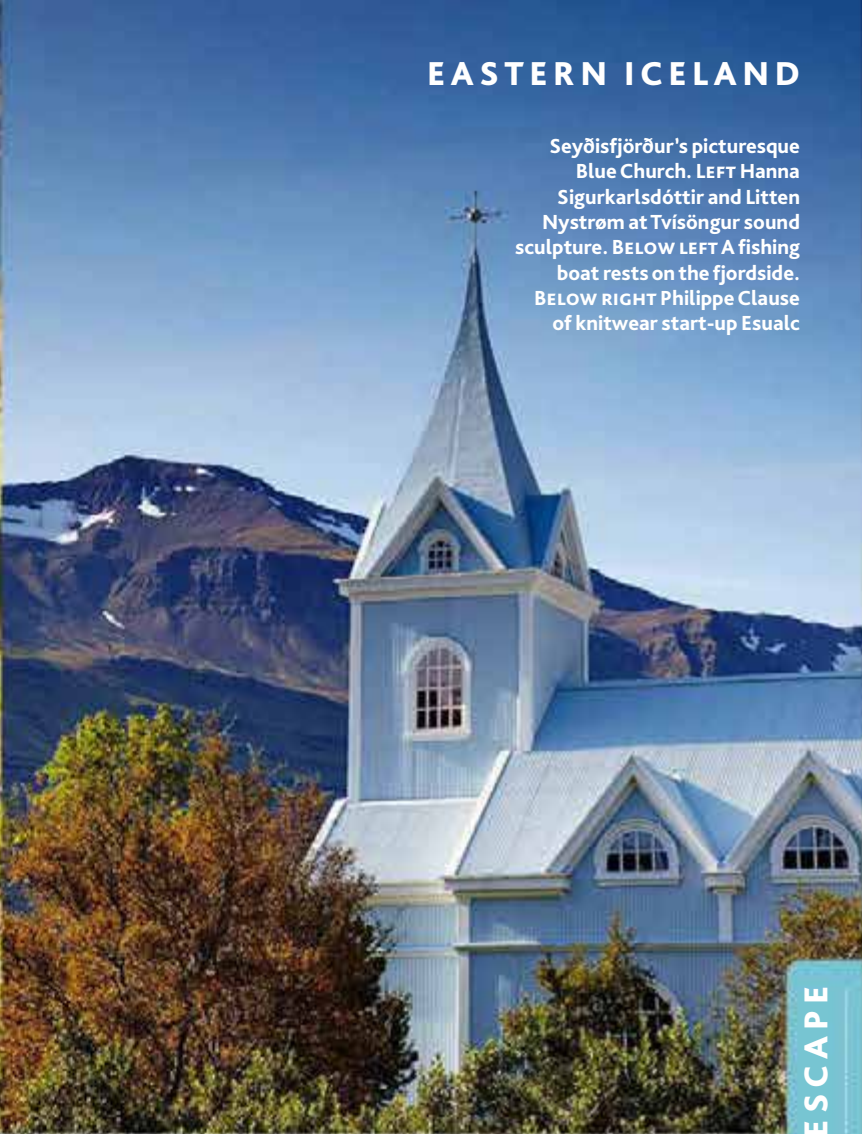


At the intersection of all village life, **Hótel Aldan** is spread across several beautifully-restored wooden houses, including the old bank and post office (from £145; hotelaldan.is). The first-floor of the main building is home to **Norð Austur**, a superb sushi restaurant with an Icelandic twist.

Skaftfell is open daily 3pm–6pm (skaftfell.is). **Tvisöngur sound sculpture** is a 15-minute walk above Strandarvegur Street (free).

EASTERN ICELAND

Seyðisfjörður's picturesque Blue Church. LEFT Hanna Sigurkarlsdóttir and Litten Nystrom at Tvísöngur sound sculpture. BELOW LEFT A fishing boat rests on the fjordside. BELOW RIGHT Philippe Clause of knitwear start-up Esualc



2. Borgarfjörður Eystri

The mountainous landscape is saga-worthy, but it's the stories of magical creatures and meddlesome spirits that cast the real spell

THE FIRST COLOURS OF autumn have arrived and Arngrímur Ásgeirsson is traversing a high volcanic ridge on the hunt for elves.

'There are lots of signs in nature they are here,' he says, pointing towards the shadowy face of Mt Dyrfjöll, a remote knuckle of rock where legend says the elf king lives. 'That's where we are headed.'

As the mist swirls, genie-like in the valley below, he picks his way past flowering crowberries and rhyolite boulders, keeping a watchful eye on the gathering clouds.

Arngrímur knows every step of the area's 125 miles of hiking trails, but what interests him most are the tales of the mountains' magical *huldufólk*, or hidden people.

Tracing his finger along the valley's contours, Arngrímur singles out the steeple-shaped Kirkjusteinn, the elvish

church, then Mt Staðarfell, a mountaintop where the troll Gellivör kidnapped shepherds to feed to her young. 'Whether you believe in these folk tales or not, you shouldn't cast judgement,' he says. 'The landscape encourages these stories to live – and they've been in my blood since I was a child.'

Borgarfjörður Eystri, population 70, is known throughout Iceland as the capital of fantasy and folklore. To leave home, they teach children, is to chance getting gobbled up by a troll at Jökulsá farm, or ambushed by Naddi, a horse-headed sea monster who lurks along the coast at Njarðvíkurskriður. Cynics may sneer, but the age-old storytelling traditions survive and the village remains fiercely proud of its heritage. 'JRR Tolkien was an Icelandic scholar,' Arngrímur says. 'His elves are *our* elves.'

Wandering this fairytale landscape, it's

not hard to imagine gollums and goblins hiding behind the rocks. Gigantic blocks of volcanic breccia litter the valley, moved vast distances during glaciation (locals say it was the work of trolls), while in between are plants that would better describe an ogre's garden: the harebell, the dwarf cornel, the bog rosemary, the lance-leaved moonwort and the goldilocks buttercup.

While village life revolves around little more than working the land and sea, superstitions continue to play their part. If a new road is to be built and a particularly renowned rock stands in the way, an elf medium is called to act as a go-between to work out a solution. 'That's why so many roads aren't straight,' Arngrímur says, a swoosh of mist enveloping the trail back to the village. 'We never disturb the elves.'

By mid-afternoon, a B-movie fug has settled on the mountains, a brooding light

Looking over a ridge southeast of Borgarfjörður Eystri towards the bay of Breiðavík. INSET Arngrímur Ásgeirsson surveys the land for mythical creatures

Essentials

bouncing off the sea. It creates the perfect atmosphere for storyteller Margrét Bragadóttir. She is recounting a tale atop Álfaborg, a flat-topped hill in the village and the supposed residence of the elf queen.

'Every visitor is fond of this place,' she says, staring out to cliffs, where thousands of fantastical little creatures – rainbow-beaked puffins – nest each summer. Having mapped the origins of some 70 elf songs and 150 folk tales across the valley, Margrét has a better insight into the fjord's legends than most. 'There is something here we can't see, but I can definitely feel,' she says. 'One day, I'm sure, I'll glimpse their world underneath my feet.'

There's a sudden crack, the skies darkening as a bank of clouds descends. With that, she turns to go, retracing her steps back down the mossy knoll, but still mindful to keep a watchful eye out for Borghildur, the elf queen of Álfaborg.

It's a 220-mile trip south on Routes 94 and 1 to your next destination, so take a full day and night to savour the sights, including Faldafoss waterfall and the delightful fishing village of Djúpvogur. ➡



🏠 **Alfheimar** – meaning 'elf's home' – is a series of red-painted farm cabins lined along the seafront. There are 30 double en suite rooms and a restaurant overseen by Arngrímur Ásgeirsson's wife Þórey Sigurðardóttir (from £120; alfheimar.com).

🧭 **Arngrímur Ásgeirsson** runs a number of highly-recommended single and multi-day hikes around the fjord's inlets and mountaintops from his guesthouse Alfheimar (alfheimar.com). As well as being a renowned storyteller, Margrét Bragadóttir makes a mean cusk fish soup (£16), which she sells at **ÁlfaCafe** on the main street.



Boat captain Guðný Helgadóttir navigates Jökulsárlón's icefield. **BELOW** A seal perches atop an iceberg



3. Jökulsárlón

Take a Zodiac trip across an iceberg-filled lagoon and, with luck, you'll spot seals sunbathing on a black sand beach

ON APPROACH FROM THE east, there is no missing the gleaming white torrent of the Breiðamerkurjökull glacier. Bit by bit, in the manner of an all-powerful leviathan, it snakes past mountains and moraine before meeting the icy blue Jökulsárlón lagoon head on. Only up close does its scale reveal itself: at 300m deep, the inlet is the lowest point in Iceland, while above, the glacier rises to 910m, hinting at the huge hinterland that lies to the frozen north.

It's cold when the photographers begin to set up at the lagoon's edge, jostling to capture sunrise as it illuminates spectacular, totem-like icebergs adrift in the water. The Jökulsárlón lagoon started forming in 1950, but over time has swollen in tandem with the shrinking glacier. Retreating at a rate of 150m each year, Breiðamerkurjökull calves ice into the water at an alarming rate, the drifting slabs carried by the current across the lagoon into a tidal channel connected to the Atlantic. Once there, they are smashed by waves into thousands of glittering jewels.

Close to the tideline, boat captain Guðný Helgadóttir is studying the lagoon from a wooden jetty. She is trying to map the safest navigable route to take visitors to within breathing distance of the glacier's snout. 'When the wind is strong the slabs bunch like sheep, but not today,' she says, pointing to the iceberg obstacle course. 'The glacial movement means the whole coastline continues to shift – it's constantly being rewritten for the next generation.'

To better understand Jökulsárlón's icebergs, it's necessary to leave the beach behind for the water. Guðný does so every afternoon to take visitors closer to the action; today she accelerates her Zodiac to within touching distance of the most stunning examples. Delicate black veins of volcanic ash embedded in the ice recast the chunks as cracked mirrors. They take on their own personalities, says Guðný, with one stack resembling a frozen monster, another a rocket set for blast-off. But while the biggest can be as tall as a church, it is the interplay of light on the ice crystals that draws the crowds. The sun's rays fall on their tips, and they soon turn a brilliant

effervescent blue, stunning the boat's passengers to silence.

As gulls wheel overhead and Arctic skua fish for herring flushed into the lagoon, Guðný explains why living nearby hasn't made life easy. Jökulsárlón was the last part of Iceland to get electricity and Guðný's family has long been part of a skirmish between nature and civilisation. 'The rivers were too dangerous to cross, so they had to traverse the glacier,' she says, bringing the boat to a standstill. 'My great, great uncle is still lost in the ice. But there is a saying in Iceland: what the glacier takes, it gives back.'

As if by decree of a Norse god, the clouds part and the sky turns golden. Glossy seals appear to bask in the sunshine, flopping onto makeshift frozen sun loungers, while a skein of wild geese takes flight. It's time for the Zodiac to make its last run of the day, back to the ice-littered ebony beach, to leave the frozen sea lying in wait, shrouded in darkness, until tomorrow.

From the lagoon, head 30 miles west along Route 1 to Skaftafell, the jumping-off point for day trips into Vatnajökull National Park. ➡

Essentials



➡ Overlooking Berufjörður, the village of Djúpvogur is home to **Hótel Framtíð**, a delightfully-creaky family-run property in a renovated Danish merchant's house. There's a seafood restaurant and cosy bar, complete with vintage pump organ (from £150 for a standard double or twin; hotelframtid.com).

📍 Guðný Helgadóttir is a boat captain for **Glacier Lagoon tours** (icelagoon.is). Zodiac trips on the lagoon cost £65 for a 1hr tour and run from May to October.

Jökulsárlón's black sand beach,
also known as Diamond Beach
for the sparkling ice crystals
that wash up on its shores

GREAT ESCAPE

4. Vatnajökull National Park

Strap on your harness and crampons for an adrenaline-packed adventure on Europe's largest and most cinematic ice sheet

HIGH ON THE HEAVILY-crevassed Svínafellsjökull glacier, Jónni 'The Beast' Sigurðsson is preparing for showtime: an abseil into a 20m-deep ice cavern. First, he scrapes the icy rim with the heel of his axe, removing a thin top layer of volcanic black ash. Next, he embeds a bolt, twisting it deep into the blue frost, the strongest chunk of the glacier. Finally, he clips into a belay device, before attaching a harness to an anchor rope.

'You can't act like a model on a catwalk here,' the mountain guide tells his group of nervous beginners, his crampons biting – crunch, crunch – as he treads closer to the edge. 'You need to be a cowboy when learning to ice climb. Like John Wayne walking into a saloon.' A moment later, he takes up the slack and launches himself out into the void, vanishing in a puff of tiny ice crystals.

Encompassing more than one-tenth of the country's entire land mass – roughly the same size as Northern Ireland – Vatnajökull National Park's unpredictable topography is as close to a lunar landscape as Europe gets. Seen on a map, it resembles a gigantic snowball thrown at the country's southeast coast, a humungous splatter of glacial ice concealing mountains, valleys and active volcanoes: a rare interplay of ice and fire. But from atop Svínafellsjökull's tongue, surrounded by crevasses, ridges and shelves, it's a perfect place to play at being Shackleton or Scott for the day.

By mid-afternoon, the click-clack of crampons has settled into a metronomic rhythm. While Jónni and his group yo-yo up and down ridgelines, glacier-viewing prop planes buzz overhead and other adventure tour companies appear. One vanishes into the labyrinth, while a mini expedition tackles a snakes and ladders circuit of via ferrata rope-lines. Because of such accessibility, the national park's guides have made Svínafellsjökull a star, helping recast the landscape as everything from Tibet and Siberia to the fifth dimension. Batman, James Bond, Lara Croft, Thor and the warring families in *Game of Thrones* have all acted out their stories here, underlining just how Vatnajökull – meaning 'glacier of rivers' – has an almost mystical pull on the imagination.

Before long, the day's activities have finished and the glacier walkers and climbers descend as a colourful jumble of fluorescent Gore-tex on white. Ahead on a sparkling crest, the warm air has begun to turn the top layer into an ice rink, creating a series of hazardous pools and trickling cataracts, but it's a transformation an expert like Jónni has anticipated. To get back out of the ice maze safely, he knows, is to understand the glacier's DNA.

'It has a mind of its own,' he says, the cornflake crunch of his crampons echoing as he clammers past one last crevasse. 'But that's its beauty. Every day has a *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* feel to it. And you never know where it's going to end.'

Essentials



Overlooking a prime section of Vatnajökull National Park, **Hótel Skaftafell** combines plenty of home comforts with IMAX-sized views of skyline-hogging glaciers. There are few dining options in this part of the country, but the in-house restaurant is one of the east coast's best, using local ingredients like lightly-salted Icelandic cod (from £140; hotelskaftafell.is).

Icelandic Mountain Guides offers combined glacier walks and introductions to ice climbing at its base camp at **Vatnajökull National Park** (from £145 including equipment; mountainguides.is).



MIKE MACEachern successfully navigated Vatnajökull National Park's glacial maze, but still got lost on his way back to Reykjavik Airport.

NEXT MONTH

Great Escape:

OUR BEST IN TRAVEL 2018 WINNER!



Ropes, ice picks, crampons and carabiners: part of the uniform for glacier climbing guide Jónni Sigurðsson



Jónni Sigurðsson assesses
the tricky route across
Svínafellsjökull glacier





Wild frontier

Queensland's far north is home to Jurassic rainforests, coral-fringed coastlines, hardy outback living and expanses of raw nature; once feared by explorers, this monumental land is now welcoming and accessible

WORDS CHRISTA LARWOOD [@clarwood](#)

PHOTOGRAPHS EWEN BELL [@ewenbell](#)

The remote headland of Cape Tribulation in northwest Queensland was named by explorer Captain James Cook. OPPOSITE A frilled dragon lizard shows off his camouflage skills



A statue in Cooktown commemorates Captain James Cook, whose ship ran aground here in 1770

N 17 JUNE 1770, CAPTAIN JAMES COOK and his bedraggled crew appeared at the mouth of the Waalumbaal River, desperate for sanctuary. After finding the fabled southern continent of Australia and mapping much of its eastern coast, Cook collided with a razor-sharp reef, part of a bewildering maze of coral shoals he would name the Great Barrier Reef. His ship, the HMS *Endeavour*, was now listing, its hull shredded on one side and filling with water, kept afloat only by staunching the leak with wool and dung.

Ahead was a wild horizon of swamps and mangroves, salt marshes and eucalypt forests. The river itself was patrolled by deadly saltwater crocodiles. But for Cook, this was a place of blessed refuge after days of terrifying adversity on the sea.

Almost 250 years later, Alberta Hornsby stands on the crest of a high knoll known as Grassy Top and traces the distant curve of the river with an outstretched finger. 'They brought their ship along here,' she says, her hair whipping in the breeze, 'and stopped by the harbour to do repairs.'

Alberta is a historian whose ancestors lived in the Bulgunwarra tribelands west of here, sheltered by the steep-sided rocky plateaux of the Dickson and Henderson Ranges. 'This is Guugu Yimithirr country,' she says. 'It was a special meeting place for 32 clans, where people would come to give birth, to arrange marriages, to settle disputes. It was a neutral zone, where no blood could be spilled intentionally.'

It was here, she explains, that 'first meaningful contact' between the Europeans and Australia's Indigenous people occurred. 'The Aboriginal men asked them to take off their clothing so they could examine the white men all over. They were fascinated by the animals on board, the pigs and chickens, which they'd never seen before.' Cook's crew were curious in turn, about local

plants and all the strange burrowing, hopping animals – 'kangaroo' is a Guugu Yimithirr word. Yet, when Cook's ship finally set sail again 48 days after its arrival, the locals set fire to the hills all around in a cleansing ceremony meant to drive the bad spirits away.

Today, the river is known as the Endeavour, and the settlement on its banks is Cooktown – a town of 2,400 people with a pretty quay, a quiet main street and no fewer than six monuments to the town's English namesake. It's the northernmost town on the eastern coast of Australia, a lonely outpost of civilisation in the midst of a region known as Far North Queensland. From here, wilderness stretches north with scant interruption to the steeped point of the Australian continent. To the south is an expanse of rainforest that runs over 200 miles to Cairns, the diving hub where most visitors' northbound journeys end.

Since Cook's first foray into the Waalumbaal, Queensland's far north continued to be a meeting point of cultures, from Indigenous tribes to Chinese gold prospectors, European missionaries and farmers. The region has long held the reputation as an Australian equivalent of the Wild West, a remote escape from the rest of the world, where the dangers of nature are ever present and independence is prized. 'Traditionally, you'd come up to these parts if you were on the run from the law,' one man tells me as we queue for beef pies at Cooktown's harbourside bakery. 'Or,' he adds, 'running from a woman.'

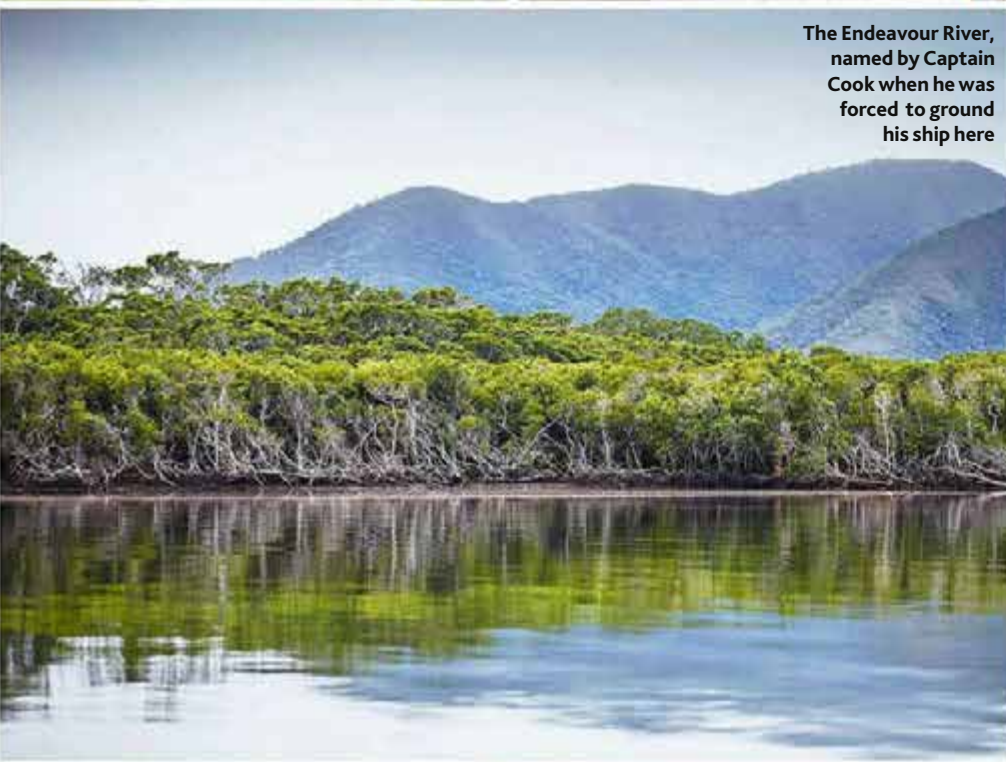
Pink-topped grasses line the road south, which soon turns from smooth tarmac into packed dirt. It scores through scrubby fields of red soil, framed on each horizon by black granite boulders as large as caravans. They rise in towering heaps known as the Black Mountains before growing sparse and disappearing under a fringe of green. ➔

QUEENSLAND'S COAST

The wet tropics of north Queensland have an abundant plant life. **LEFT** Historian Alberta Hornsby. **FAR LEFT** A male leaden flycatcher



The Endeavour River, named by Captain Cook when he was forced to ground his ship here



Queensland's fauna spans the gentle (far right) to the fearsome (this, and right)





Local Nugal-warra elder Willie Gordon is passionate about his Aboriginal culture; much of his knowledge has been handed down by his father

This scrappy stretch of pastoral land is populated by little more than grazing cattle and skittish bands of wallabies, but in the 1870s, the discovery of gold, copper and tin drew hopeful prospectors here from across the world. By the end of the 19th century, the region's population had swollen to 30,000, making Cooktown the second most populous town in Queensland at the time.

Just south of a zigzag bend in the Annan River, where fortunes were once scooped up from creek beds, is the Lion's Den Hotel. From its establishment in 1875 until well into the 20th century, this was the tin miners' watering hole of choice, and today it still stands by the side of the road, shaded by century-old mango trees.

It's little more than a shack, with beams of raw timber holding up a rust-splodged roof of corrugated iron. Inside is a riot of dangling bric-à-brac, from dusty turtle shells and cattle horns to donated brassieres. Every surface is scrawled with visitors' messages – a tradition begun in the days when the local 'tin scratchers' would tot up their bar tabs on the walls. According to local legend, anything goes in this place, from week-long drinking sessions to epic bar brawls, where patrons might be joined indoors by wandering cattle. A photograph on the wall shows a beery pub-goer in a vest wrangling a monstrous snake as long as the bar.

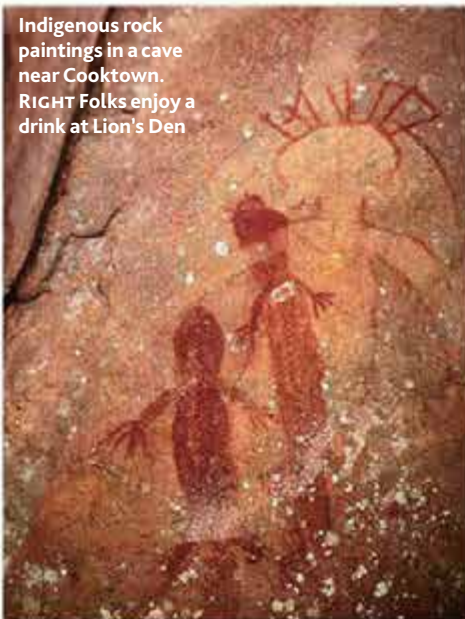
Along that same bar today, locals shoot the breeze in the laid-back, nasal drawl of the region that sounds not unlike the atonal caws of the crows in surrounding trees. Among them is 71-year-old Jack Ryle, with a rusty bark of a laugh and a 'stubby' of beer in one hand. Jack has been a regular at 'the Den' since moving to the area 38 years ago and knows all the stories from the old days.

'Tin scratchers worked hard, played hard,' Jack says. 'They would drink neat spirits and home-brewed rocket fuel, so this was a rough and ready place. Not too many would have brought their kids here back then – a bit different to now.' He nods to the Den's yard, where raucous children are chasing one another.

There may be less risk of a brawl these days, but Jack still relishes the lifestyle here and the hardy characters of a region he dubs 'the world's largest unfenced asylum'. 'It's so bloody laid-back,' he says, taking a swig of his beer. 'No one worries much. It's a laugh from go to whoa. It's so far off the beaten track, you never see a politician. And no police breathalisers here, mate.' He gives a grin. 'Which is just as well.'

South of the pub, the trees that have been massing ranks on the roadside reach overhead, creating a verdant tunnel. The dirt road known as the Bloomfield Track winds its rough rutted way up hillsides and down steep gullies through a never-ending thicket of palm fronds, vines and eucalypts straining to reach beyond the canopy's

Indigenous rock paintings in a cave near Cooktown. **RIGHT** Folks enjoy a drink at Lion's Den



*'The road winds its way
through a never-ending
thicket of palm fronds,
vines and eucalypts'*

Grevillea baileyana,
or 'white oak', is a
shrub native to the
rainforests of northeast
Queensland





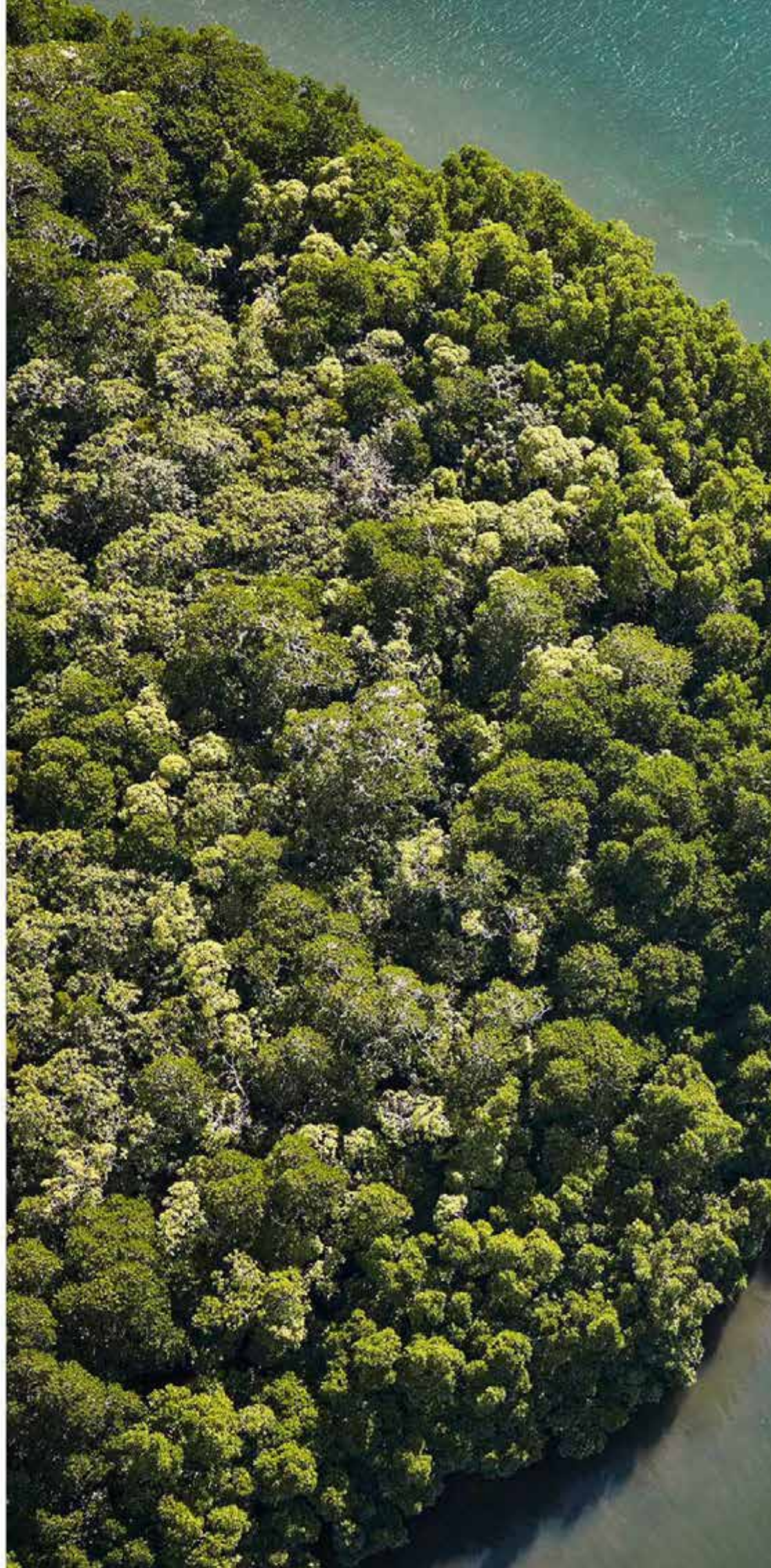
shade. The air is pierced by the buzzsaw chorus of countless insects, birdsong and low-throated amphibian croaks.

This is the Daintree – the world's oldest rainforest. Endemic plants, such as the pink-budding ribbonwoods peeking through the chaos of foliage, have lineages dating back 180 million years, from before the Australian continent broke free of Gondwanaland. Creatures that pass in peripheral snatches of colour resemble something prehistoric themselves – the cassowary, with its predator's gait and bony, shark-fin crest, or the raptor-eyed brush turkey, with its bald red head and yellow wattle that swings as he dashes by. The surrounding forest is near-impenetrable for humans, with mere feet of visibility in even the clearest of patches.

'To get a proper sense of the scale of it, you need to see the Daintree from above.' Pilot Michael Reed raises his helicopter so the forest shrinks into a sprawling carpet of green, pocked with small naked patches of charcoal black – the legacy of past lightning strikes. The Daintree River forks and curves across the expanse, its banks dotted with fat brown crocodiles basking in the sun.

'The forest is obviously made up of individual trees and plants, but it also works together as a whole ecosystem,' Michael says. 'During cyclone season, the root systems intertwine one with another like they're holding hands, so they can stand fast against the winds.'

At the forest edge is a golden ribbon of sand, then a plunge into clear blue – the edge of the Pacific. There, the coral islands of the Great Barrier Reef appear just below the water, stretching out far into the distance like the bones of a forgotten continent. The coast curves down to a jutting lip of foliage-fringed beach known as Cape Tribulation – named by Captain Cook as a sign of disfavour as it marked the place where the *Endeavour* first collided with the reef. 'Here,' Cook wrote in his captain's log, 'began all our troubles.' ➔





An aerial view of the Daintree River as it runs through the Daintree Rainforest, near Cape Tribulation. FAR LEFT Horses at Wetherby Station, in far north Queensland



A swimmer crab.
BELOW Crabbers on
Cooya Beach, a
traditional fishing
ground of the Kuku
Yalanji people

Michael brings the helicopter in to land and the rising landscape shows the great forest thinning. Open paddocks of grass appear, along with fields of tall sugar cane ripe for harvest, their feathery white tops grasping at the breeze.

To the west, between the edge of a vast plateau known as the Einasleigh Uplands and the forested ridges of the Great Dividing Range, the land sprawls out into tropical wetlands, open woods and savannah run through with shady creeks. At its centre is Wetherby Station, a weatherboard farmstead with a broad, wraparound veranda.

Current owner John Colless is in the adjacent field, hand-feeding his herd of prize calves, which jostle and nudge him, their pelts shining dark amber in the late afternoon sun. These cows, he explains, are 'Brangus' – a cross between a Brahman and the Aberdeen Angus, bred to withstand the weather of the far north.

'When they brought the English cattle breeds, like the Hereford or shorthorn up here to begin with, they couldn't cope with the hot weather or the rain, and the stocks were decimated,' John says from under the

brim of his Akubra bush hat. 'But these ones are tolerant of the heat and resistant to tics, so they thrive here.'

The farm stretches over 4,000 acres and is home to countless native animals, from kangaroos nibbling at the grasses to white-spotted quolls and bandicoots scampering through the undergrowth. John points out a creek where reclusive platypuses emerge at dusk and gestures to the source of mocking laughter ringing in the air – a tiny, bright-eyed kookaburra.

Wetherby Station was established in 1878 as a sugar-cane farm, and large tracts of virgin forest were cleared to make way for crops. Since taking over the farm 10 years ago, John and his wife, Kathy, have been attempting to return the property to a more natural state, planting swathes of native trees from eucalypts to fuzzy-flowered pink bottlebrush plants and lofty Leichardt pines.

The station was once a resting place for miners and prospectors heading to the gold fields. To reach here, they drove buggies along the only route available from the coast, known as the Bump Track – a perpendicular dirt trail known for its

Cooya Beach stretches ahead – a curve of golden sand backed



teeth-rattling jolts – but the track was based on an old Indigenous walking path used by the Kuku Yalanji tribe to traverse their territory from the mountains to the sea.

Near the end of that ancient trail, at Cooya Beach, Juan Walker treads his way carefully through the mangroves, lifting his knees up high so as not to trip over their hoop-like roots, his bare feet squelching. He looks down at his legs in grey mud. 'Just think of it like a cheap pedicure,' he says.

Juan spent his childhood exploring this beach with his grandparents, learning about their Kuku Yalanji culture. 'They knew the old ways,' Juan says. 'They taught us how to hunt, how to make a boomerang and a spear. We're lucky that knowledge survived.'

From the late 19th century, Indigenous people across Queensland were driven from their lands, forced into Christian missions and forbidden to practise their culture. 'Until 1967, Aboriginal people were classed as fauna, not even people,' says Juan.

Cooya Beach stretches ahead – a curve of golden sand backed by a tangled bulwark of hibiscus trees and mangroves. The tide is far out in the distance, revealing broad flats

pocked with divots left by stingrays sucking up sea worms from the ocean floor. 'We don't own this place,' says Juan. 'We belong to it.' He pats the sand. 'That's country. We're responsible for it and we have to look after it so our spirit has somewhere to rest.'

At first glance, the stretch ahead seems lifeless, but Juan points out creatures hidden in plain sight: the tiny angelfish, almost indistinguishable from a floating orange leaf; a half-buried blue swimmer crab, visible only by its tiny blue claws. 'There's life everywhere,' Juan says. 'You just need to know where to look.'

He heads towards the horizon to catch some crabs or a stingray for dinner and soon he's a distant figure silhouetted against the silver water, a long bamboo spear resting on one shoulder. It's a scene that seems entirely natural in this place and one that has been repeated countless times over generations of local hunters, long before an English sea captain caught sight of these shores. 🐟



CHRISTA LARWOOD regularly contributes to the magazine and relished the chance to explore the wild northern reaches of her home country.

by a tangled bulwark of hibiscus trees and mangroves'



MAKE IT HAPPEN

Queensland

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE AND AROUND

Qantas, Philippine Airlines and several other airlines codeshare services into Cairns (from £730; qantas.com), but Qantas is the sole airline operating flights from London to Cooktown, via Dubai and Sydney or Brisbane.

A car is essential for getting around northern Queensland, and you'll need a 4WD to tackle the Bloomfield Track (from £36 per day; rhinocarhire.com).

WHEN TO GO

The best time to visit is in winter. July and August mark the dry season in the tropical north, when visitors can enjoy sunny days of around 26°C. Good conditions for travel begin at the end of March, after the wet season abates.

EXPLORE THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Australia's World Heritage-listed reef stretches 1,400 miles along

the Queensland coast, and there are many ways to discover its colourful depths. For an up-close encounter, depart from Port Douglas an hour north of Cairns and scuba dive or snorkel over the Agincourt Reef (from £150; tropicaljourneys.com). Non-swimmers can experience an 'underwater walk' wearing a fishbowl-like diving helmet or take a spin in a semi-submersible with big windows designed to give 360-degree views of the surrounding coral (half-day tours from £150 per person; quicksilver-cruises.com). The Whitsunday Islands to the south of Cairns are scattered along the coast near the reef, and are best explored as part of a live-aboard sailing trip that stops in remote locations to snorkel or dive (one night from £235; explorewhitsundays.com). Choose one that includes a visit to Whitehaven Beach – accessible only by water or air, this is one of the world's most beautiful beaches, featuring extraordinarily fine white sand.

HELP PROTECT THE REEF

The Great Barrier Reef is a fragile ecosystem, and climate change and rising sea temperatures are increasingly having a damaging effect. Visitors can help preserve the reef by booking tours with eco-certified providers who support conservation efforts.

There is also a way to assist local marine scientists by conducting research. Armed with Reefsearch instructions, snorkellers, divers and 'reef-walkers' can record what they see, and share observations and photographs with scientists via an online hub. The results are used to gain a broad understanding of trends in the Great Barrier Reef's health (Reefsearch field kit £15; reefcheckaustralia.org).

FURTHER READING

Pick up our *Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef* guide (£15.99; lonelyplanet.com) and delve into queensland.com for inspiration.



QUEENSLAND: COOKTOWN TO CAIRNS



BEHIND THE SCENES



Of all the rich variety of wildlife in Queensland, the humble cane toad is by far the most detested creature. It was introduced from South America in 1935 and has since infested the region, killing swathes of native animals with its venom. Many locals will swerve to squash cane toads when driving, but when photographer Ewen and I came upon one on a dark road outside Mossman, Ewen lay down on the warm tarmac and photographed him instead. The toad waited patiently for his close-up, then hopped off into the dark.

Christa Larwood



Itinerary



1 If beginning the journey in Cairns, start with a four-hour drive north along State Route 81 to reach **Cooktown**. Once there, explore the mangrove-lined curves of the **Endeavour River** and spot saltwater crocodiles lurking by the water's edge on a two-hour dinghy tour (from £40 per person; fishingcooktown.com). Grab a fresh seafood lunch such as a 'peel-your-own bucket of prawns' at **1770 Restaurant** on the waterfront (from £12; 3/7 Webber Esplanade), then head over to Cooktown **Botanic Gardens** to wander among the native plants and discover the exquisite floral illustrations of botanist Vera Scarth-Johnson (entry free; Finch Bay Road).



2 It's around a 20-mile drive south to Rossville, and the legendary **Lion's Den Hotel**. Stay for a glass of the favoured local beers: Great Northern or

Castlemaine XXXX (from £3.50; lionsdenhotel.net). Continue to **Bloomfield**, where locals from the **Wujal Wujal** Aboriginal Community run tours to the thundering Bloomfield Falls (from £15; adventurenorthaustralia.com). The Bloomfield Track stretches from here to **Cape Tribulation**, winding through the ancient Daintree Rainforest. Stop overnight at the **Ferntree Rainforest Lodge** (below left), a collection of cosy wood cabins set deep in the forest (from £85; ferntreerainforestlodge.com.au).



3 Get a bird's-eye-view of the Daintree, setting off from **Port Douglas** on the southern tip of the rainforest and seeing where the world's oldest rainforest meets the Great Barrier Reef (from £245; gbrhelicopters.com.au). Then head to the **Silky Oaks Lodge** (above right). Located deep in the rainforest near Mossman, this luxury eco-lodge has self-contained tree-house cabins with floor-to-ceiling windows and broad balconies complete with hammocks. You could explore the nearby walking tracks, or simply lie back and relax to the sounds of local birdlife and the Mossman River flowing by (from £310; silkyoakslodge.com.au).



4 For an introduction to the forest culture of the **Kuku Yalanji** Indigenous group, head to Mossman Gorge, which runs upstream from Silky Oaks Lodge (walks from £40; mossmangorge.com.au). It's then a 10-minute drive east to **Cooya Beach** for a spearfishing adventure. Juan Walker tells the story of his country and demonstrates the traditional hunting methods of his ancestors, followed by a campfire lunch of crabs and seafood (from £100; walkaboutadventures.com.au).



5 An hour's drive south is the small mountain village of **Kuranda**, the start of a historic railway (above) that winds through forested hills via tracks carved out by early European settlers. Enjoy views towards the coast and the waterfalls of the **Barron Gorge National Park** on the two-hour journey to Cairns (from £30; ksr.com.au), the gateway city to the Great Barrier Reef.

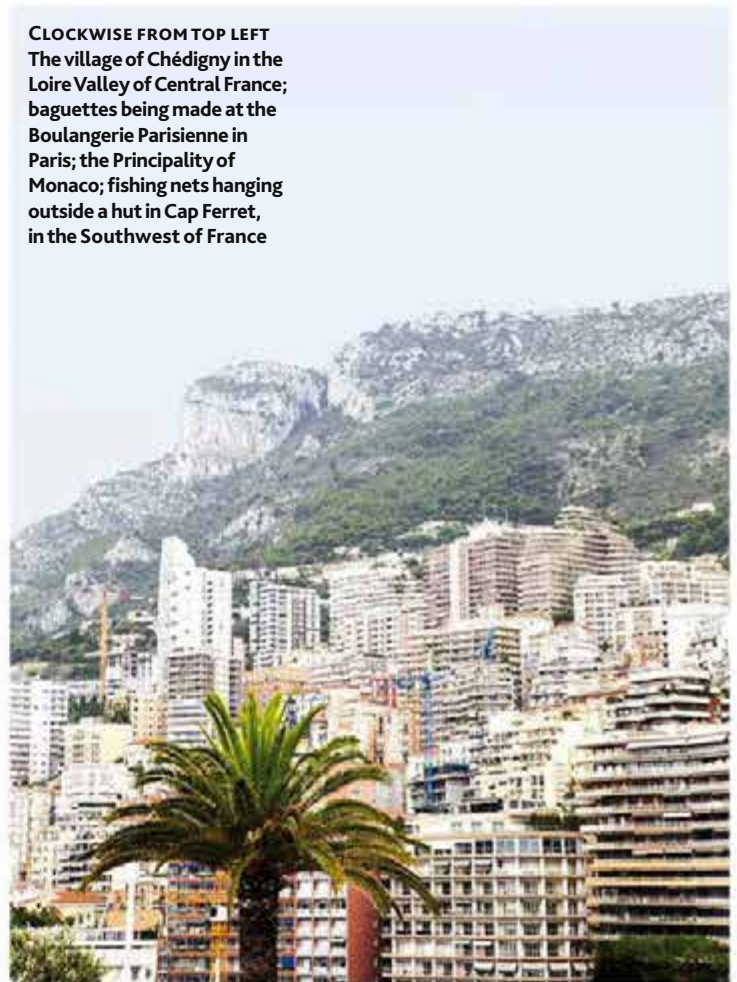
FRANCE

from the source

A new Lonely Planet cookbook, *France From the Source*, collects together authentic recipes from the very birthplace of the word 'cuisine' and brings the know-how and passion of generations to your table. Bon appétit!

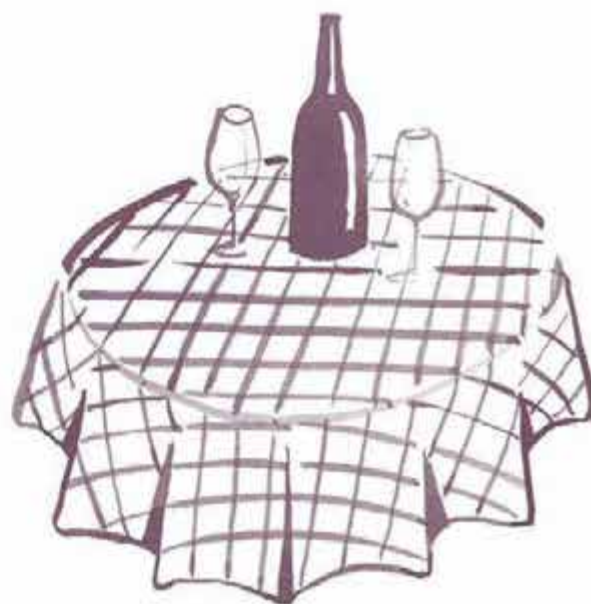
WORDS CAROLYN BOYD [@carolynboyd](#) PHOTOGRAPHS RIVER THOMPSON [@riverthompson](#)





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
The village of Chédigny in the
Loire Valley of Central France;
baguettes being made at the
Boulangerie Parisienne in
Paris; the Principality of
Monaco; fishing nets hanging
outside a hut in Cap Ferret,
in the Southwest of France

Over the following pages, we showcase a variety of signature dishes from across the French regions. From the sumptuous, tarragon-infused chicken enjoyed in the heart of Normandy to the simple conviviality of a parsley-scented pot of moules on the Atlantic coast, these meals are rich – both in the delicate balance of their ingredients as well as their proud heritage, perfected by families over centuries. And who knows – perhaps these recipes will lead you on a journey to discover, and savour, the places from which they originate.



Northern France

BAGUETTE (French bread)

If you had to sum up the whole of French cuisine in one item, the humble baguette would surely be it. With its golden crust hiding a tender white dough inside, all it needs is a hunk of cheese or some butter and it's a meal in itself.

The baguette voted the best in Paris is that of Mickaël Reydellet. With seven outlets of his La Parisienne bakery, the first of which he opened aged 22, he has spent the past 10 years perfecting his formula and now sells 10,000 baguettes every day. 'It's something with a life of its own; you have to respect the temperature, the yeast, the flour. The ideal is that it has a dark golden crust, so that it has all the aromas,' he says, squeezing the loaf so that it gently cracks or, as he says, 'sings'.



BAGUETTE

SERVES 6–8 PREP & COOK 1hr
(not including 5½hr waiting time)

1 kg (2¼lb) flour, plus extra for sprinkling
18g (¾oz) salt
720ml (1¼pt) water
10g (½oz) yeast

- 1** Place all the ingredients in a food mixer with a dough hook and knead for ten minutes until it's a smooth and well-combined paste.
- 2** Leave to stand for five hours.
- 3** Divide the dough into three 350g (12½oz) pieces and into three long baguettes.
- 4** Let stand for 30 minutes.
- 5** Preheat the oven to 250°C (480°F).
- 6** Sprinkle with flour and make five diagonal scores with a knife down the length of each baguette.
- 7** Bake the baguettes in the oven for 20 minutes. Best served within three hours of baking.

POULET DE VALLÉE DE L'AUGE (Auge Valley chicken)

Just south of the Norman coast, the rustic heart of the region offers up a delicious bounty. Local cheeses, cream and butter are rich in temptation, while the apples that grow in abundance are at the heart of many of the dishes served in the Pays d'Auge.

This recipe uses a whole chicken rather than just the legs of the traditional version and the juicy, sticky chicken is further enhanced by the caramelised apples. The recipe is a simple yet decadent treat, even without the Calvados that many cooks use to flambé it at the end.

POULET DE VALLÉE DE L'AUGE

SERVES 4 PREP & COOK 1hr
20min

selection of garden herbs (such as bay, thyme, tarragon)
1 x 1.8kg (4lb) free-range chicken
salt, to taste
pepper, to taste
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp butter, plus 1 tbsp for caramelising apples
250ml–500ml (8¾ fl oz–17½ fl oz) dry cider (less for smaller chickens)
4 firm-fleshed apples (such as Golden Delicious)
fleur de sel
1 tbsp demerara/golden cane sugar
pinch of cinnamon
pinch of ginger
2 sprigs of tarragon
2 tbsp crème fraîche

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C (350°F).

2 Put the herbs inside the chicken's

- carcass and add salt and pepper. Put the chicken in the roasting dish and massage it with the olive oil and butter. Roast in the oven until golden (approx 30–45 minutes).
- 3** Pour the cider over the chicken and put back in the oven for another 30 minutes. Cook until the juices run clear.
- 4** Core the apples and cut them into quarters.
- 5** Put 1 tbsp of butter on the apples, add fleur de sel and pepper to taste, then fry them until golden. Then add 1 tbsp sugar, a pinch of cinnamon and a pinch of ginger to the pan and caramelize the apples.
- 6** Remove the chicken from the oven and reserve the pan of roasting juices. Place the chicken in a shallow dish with the apples and sprinkle with 2 tbsp of the tarragon leaves.
- 7** Add 2 tbsp of crème fraîche to the warm juices in the roasting pan. Mix together and pour into a gravy boat. Pour some of the sauce over the chicken and serve. ➔



If you want to make Auge Valley chicken even more decadent, follow the Normandy custom of serving a shot of Calvados between courses. OPPOSITE Baker Mickaël Reydellet

Central France

SALADE DE TOMATES AVEC SOUPE FROIDE DE TOMATES (Tomato salad & chilled tomato soup)

There can be no better taste than that of a tomato you've grown yourself; it's the taste of sunshine, with a sweetness not often achieved by the shop-bought varieties. Imagine, then, the bounty of flavours that come with growing some 650 varieties, in all manner of shapes, sizes and colours. Each one brings something different to the open kitchen of the Bar à Tomates in the Château de la Bourdaisière's garden.

Here, chef Yacinthe de Geyer cooks simple dishes that let the fruit's flavours shine through, using them for the salad and then the leftovers for a gazpacho-style soup. Ask him to name his favourites and it's like asking him to name a favourite child, but he admits to a few. 'I like the Coeur de Boeuf: it has very thin skin and very few seeds and it just melts in the mouth,' he says. 'Then there are some that are like tiny yellow pears and they are so tasty. The tiny ones are the tastiest.'

Yacinthe de Geyer
(above, right) creates
dishes from the 650
varieties of tomato that
grow in the walled garden
of Château Bourdaisière,
Montlouis-sur-Loire



SALADE DE TOMATES AVEC SOUPE FROIDE DE TOMATES

SERVES 4 PREP & COOK 30min

FOR THE SALAD

**12 garden tomatoes (three
different varieties x four
tomatoes), sliced**
32 fresh basil leaves
dash of olive oil
sea salt flakes, to taste
black pepper, to taste

FOR THE COLD TOMATO SOUP

1.4kg (3lb) tomatoes
4 or 5 cloves of garlic
150g (5¼oz) white onion,
finely chopped
100ml (3½ fl oz) extra virgin
olive oil
20ml (¾ fl oz) sherry vinegar
6 good pinches of black pepper
4 good pinches of salt
250ml (8¾ fl oz) water

TO SERVE

drizzle of olive oil
16 croutons (1.5cm x 1.5cm/½in
x ½in), to serve (see p102)
4 basil leaves, to serve

1 For the salad, slice the tomatoes and arrange on the plate, decorate with torn basil leaves. Drizzle with olive oil, and season with salt and pepper, to taste.

2 To make the cold tomato soup, put all ingredients except the water in a blender and blitz until smooth.

3 Add the water and blend again.

4 Push the liquid through a conical sieve to eliminate the seeds.

5 Serve the soup in bowls with a drizzle of olive oil, croutons and a basil leaf. Serve the salad on the side.



Southeast France

CRÊPES SUZETTE

(Flambéed crêpes with orange butter sauce)

The creation of crêpes suzette is one of French gastronomy's most famous tales. The most popular story goes that in 1895, the Prince of Wales was dining at the Café de Paris in Monte Carlo, but things didn't go to plan. The restaurant's current head chef Franck Lafon explains: 'The chef wanted to create a special dessert, but when he poured the alcohol into the pan, it burst into flames. The Prince really liked it and asked what it was called. The chef created a name and said, "Princely crêpes". The Prince, as he was there with his girlfriend, said, "We'll call them crêpes Suzette".' On the dish itself, Franck adds: 'The secret is to have good products: good oranges, Grand Marnier and good butter. You can't do a "light" version!'



At Café de Paris, where Franck Lafon (above) is head chef, crêpes Suzette are always flambéed by the waiter, thus creating a gastronomic spectacle



CRÊPES SUZETTE

SERVES 4 PREP & COOK 1hr 30min

1 orange
1 lemon
150g (5¼oz) flour
2g (¾oz) finely ground salt
150g (5¼oz) sugar
4 eggs
1 vanilla bean
30ml (1 fl oz) curaçao liqueur
500ml (17½ fl oz) milk
50g (1¾oz) butter + 100g (3½oz) butter
8 sugar cubes
100ml (3½ fl oz) orange juice
50ml (1¾ fl oz) lemon juice
30ml (1 fl oz) cognac
100ml (3½ fl oz) Grand Marnier
sprinkle of sugar, to serve

1 Grate the zest from half the orange and half the lemon, juice the flesh and set the juice aside. Reserve the remaining peel.

2 In a bowl, mix the flour, salt, sugar, eggs, vanilla, curaçao and milk. Sprinkle with a pinch of the

orange and lemon zest, and then whisk the batter until it is smooth.

3 Pour the mixture through a conical sieve into another bowl to eliminate lumps, then let the batter rest for 1 hour.

4 Melt the 50g of butter in a small to medium-sized pan and cook until it is golden brown, then pour in a ladleful of batter, turning the pan until the batter covers the base. Cook for 30 seconds on each side until lightly golden brown. Repeat with the remainder of the batter, then set the crêpes aside.

5 Rub sugar cubes on the remaining orange and lemon peel.

6 Melt the 100g of butter and sugar cubes in a pan to create a caramel, then pour in the lemon juice and orange juice and another teaspoon of orange zest.

7 Place the crêpes in the juice in the pan and soak, then fold the crêpes into quarters. Add cognac and Grand Marnier to the pan.

8 Flambée and sprinkle with sugar before serving. →

Southwest France

MOULES MARINIÈRE (Moules marinière)

From the moment you remove the lid of the characteristic black enamel pot and reveal the steaming mussels, laced with white wine and parsley, the briny aroma of moules marinière will instantly transport you to the seaside. You may well be there already, for moules marinière is served in almost every beachside bistro in France. You could also be miles from the sea, such is the ubiquity of this favourite seafood dish.

At the Hôtel de la Plage, a 19th-century canteen for forestry workers, which is tucked between oyster-farmers' huts on the Cap Ferret peninsula, it's a favourite dish for both locals and tourists. Here, the clatter of empty mussel shells being dropped into the pot's deep lid is as familiar a sound as the clinking of glasses.

For his version of moules marinière, which uses olive oil as well as butter, chef Bruno Grand-Clément uses the local catch, moules de bouchot. 'It's a simple recipe: shallots, garlic, thyme, butter, white wine and parsley,' says Bruno. 'My mother is Breton, so I grew up with lots of seafood and ate moules marinière all the time as a child. Everyone has their own story to tell about them.'

Moules marinière are enjoyed all over France, yet the aroma of mussels, garlic and parsley is particularly evocative of seaside restaurants and bistros



MOULES MARINIÈRE

SERVES 4 PREP & COOK 1hr

2kg (4½lb) mussels (moules de bouchot, preferably)
40g (1½oz) shallots
40g (1½oz) parsley, plus extra to garnish
80g (3oz) butter
1 tbsp olive oil
1 sprig of thyme
½–2 head of garlic, peeled
800ml (1½pt) dry white wine
freshly ground black pepper, to taste


- 1 Scrub the mussels, pull off the 'beards' and wash in several baths of cold water.
- 2 Discard the mussels that are already open or damaged. Drain the remaining mussels.
- 3 Peel and finely chop the shallots. Wash and blot the parsley, then chop finely.
- 4 In a large casserole pot, melt half the butter with 1 tbsp olive oil, and fry the shallots until soft. Add the mussels along with half of the chopped parsley, the thyme and whole garlic cloves.
- 5 Deglaze the base of the pan with the white wine, add freshly ground black pepper. Bring to the boil on a high heat, and cover for six to eight

minutes. Stir the mussels gently.

6 As soon as some of the mussels start to open, take off the heat.

7 Drain the mussels over a bowl and sieve to eliminate any bits of sand and shell, reserving the juice. Discard any mussels that haven't opened. Add the filtered juice back to the pan and simmer over a high heat until the liquid has reduced by a third.

8 Take off the heat, and add the rest of the butter, cut into pieces.

9 Pour the sauce over the mussels, and sprinkle over the rest of the parsley. 



The Michelin-starred restaurant of Château de la Treyne overlooks the River Dordogne in the Southwest of France



From village bakeries to high-end restaurants, France's best local cooks share their most authentic regional dishes in our new book, which gets to the source of the country's finest cuisine. To claim your exclusive 35% reader discount on *France: From the Source*, use the code LP35 on lonelyplanet.com (offer may not be combined with other discounts; available until 2 November 2017).




BEYOND COMPARE?

From castaway beaches to exquisite chocolate, the remote African island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe has attractions to rival the world's best

WORDS JO KEELING [@SlowJoKeeling](#) PHOTOGRAPHS JUSTIN FOULKES [@justinfoulkes](#)

The needle-shaped volcanic plug of Pico Cão Grande rises high above the rainforest in the south of the island of São Tomé



IT HAS BEACHES AS IDYLIC AS THE SEYCHELLES'

Rainforest cloaks 90 per cent of the island of Príncipe, tumbling down from its volcanic peaks to trespass on the coves that crease its northern coast. Where forest meets sea, palms protrude at opportunistic angles, as if to announce the empty beaches with an unbridled 'ta-dah!'.

The island's many beaches range from the blissfully remote to lively fishing hubs. On Praia de Santa Rita, snorkellers drift over a small reef, seeking out parrotfish, barracuda and Golden African snapper. To the west, on Praia de Coco, the prints in the sand left by lone wanderers are likely joined only by those of languid dogs. And aside from a pair of jostling tropicbirds, Praia Banana, which once starred in a Bacardi ad, is deserted. Turquoise water laps at basalt boulders and a coconut is tossed about by the waves. It's all a bit much for one palm, which has crashed out from the sheer bliss of it all.

Further east, at Praia dos Burros, teenagers play cards on upturned boats while young boys perform back flips into the shallow water, shrieking with laughter and emerging plastered in sand. In front of the ramshackle

stilt homes, flying fish are splayed out on rope beds, drying in the sun. 'Bondja ô!' calls a fisherman, whose wide smile reveals two premolars at the corners of his mouth.

He wanders over to share a few words of the local Forro language. Portuguese is the official language on the islands, but 85 per cent of people speak one of three creoles. 'Bon-jow-oooh' he sings, drawing out the vowels of his good morning greeting, and laughs, proving that a warm Santomean welcome is just as appealing as a day in the sun on the beach.

● All beaches are public except those of Bom Bom Island Resort (£17; bombomprincipe.com) and Praia Banana, accessed via Roça Belo Monte (belomontehotel.com).

The beach at Bom Bom on Príncipe, with its stilted walkway crossing the water to an island resort of the same name (p87)

Writer Jo Keeling
at a ruined
15th-century
church at the
end of one of six
new walking
trails on Príncipe

IT HAS HIKING TRAILS AS MYSTERIOUS AS PERU'S

It's late afternoon and the saturated hues of Príncipe's northwest coast are being painted with even more vivid brushstrokes: in this light, the bandy palm trunks appear almost amber and the wavy leaves of tropical almond trees turn an iridescent green.

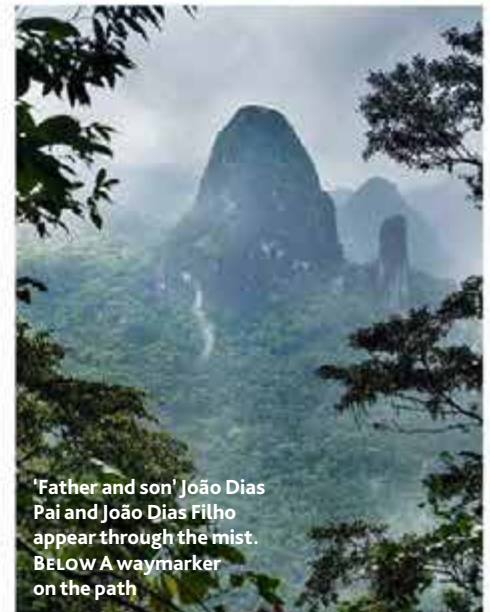
The slow way to soak up these shifting colours is to pick up one of six new hiking trails on the island. I set off on the two-mile path from Praia Bom Bom to Ribeira Izé and find it bouncy with decaying palm leaves and almond husks. It is littered with fallen breadfruit – soft, fibrous and swarming with ants. The trail finally emerges at a ruined church, the remains of the first settlement built by Portuguese seafarers in 1471.

Exploring an increasingly mapped ocean, they had stumbled upon the pioneer's Holy Grail – an uninhabited archipelago. They populated this benign lost world with slaves from Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique, planting with cocoa and sugarcane. Five centuries on, the rainforest is slowly metabolising this first human footprint. Three enormous trees twist out of the church's nave; epiphytes wrap around the branches; white roots splay over the crumbling, coral-coloured walls.

Further along the coast, low clouds shroud the twin peaks of João Dias Pai and João Dias Filho (the 'father and son'), leaving a sense that something much larger looms behind. Príncipe's thickly forested interior is skewered with phonolithic rock towers, ranging from phallic pinnacles to flat table-tops. I join Estrela Matilde, project manager for the island's Unesco Biosphere Reserve, in a hike to the summit of one of the largest – Pico Papagaio (680m).

As the path nears the top after a four-hour scramble, it steepens rapidly; my hands grapple for red ropes knotted between trees and I haul myself up sheer rocks. Finally, we emerge with muddy knees and triumphant smiles. In the time it takes to soak up the surroundings at the summit, views of the 'father and son' opposite dissolve into mist. 'Without upkeep, a trail like this can completely change within weeks,' Estrela says. As if to demonstrate her point, the heavens open and flood the path with a Biblical downpour.

● Local walking guides can be arranged via the Biosphere Reserve – ask at your hotel for a contact. ➔



'Father and son' João Dias Pai and João Dias Filho appear through the mist. BELOW A waymarker on the path



IT CHAMPIONS SLOW FOOD AS WELL AS ITALY DOES

The country's motto, 'léve, léve' (literally, 'easy, easy'), is revealed in everything Santomeans do – and after a couple of days of disarming conversations and unhurried meals, it's hard not to follow suit. Then again, in a world of abundance where fish literally leap from the sea and one can almost see the plants grow in the wet, warm climate, why rush?

Chef João Carlos Silva believes that this culture of slow, simple pleasures filters into the nation's cuisine. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, local food is characterised by time-consuming specialities. The national dish, calulu – dried smoked fish cooked in a soup with breadfruit, palm oil, mosquito herb and okra – takes six hours to cook. 'On São Tomé, happiness transforms everything we do, even the flavour of our food,' he says, taking inordinate care in preparing banana recheada – fruit stuffed with bacon and knotted in a neat lemongrass parcel. 'You know how in Bhutan they measure Gross National Happiness? The same is true here. Happiness is our richest income.'

It's lunchtime at his restaurant, Roça São João, on the east coast of São Tomé, and the lure of João Carlos's tasting menu has filled every seat. As the chink of cutlery echoes around the vast balcony overlooking Santa Cruz bay, a dozen cooks tend to wood-fired ovens and slice tiny local limes to make red grouper ceviche. At the far end of the balcony, sated guests indulge in a spot of 'léve, léve', reclining in hammocks and idling thumbing through a volume from one of the many bookcases.

● A seven-course local tasting menu costs £13 (facebook.com/rocasaojoao).

Slow-food chef João Carlos Silva at his restaurant Roça São João. RIGHT Fried fish with aubergine, sweet potato, olives and orange covered in manioc flour





The tiny island capital of Santo António, founded in the 16th century and now home to 1,200 people



A tractor-based troupe of trumpeters in Santo António. LEFT AND RIGHT Portuguese architecture along the streets



ITS OLD CAPITAL IS AS CHARISMATIC AS CUBA'S

It's Sunday morning in Príncipe's main town, Santo António, and time has slowed almost to a halt. If 'léve, léve' is easygoing, the Príncipian equivalent, 'móli-móli', is virtually dormant. A boy rolls a tyre beside the dawdling Papagaio River. Stray dogs pant in the shade and passers-by greet one another with disarming smiles. Placid babies are slung low on backs in colourful wraps. For a while, the only sound is a tinny medley of Angolan kizomba music from

battery-powered speakers, before a tractor rolls by carrying a troupe of trumpet players.

This triangle of unpaved, potholed streets is tiny – but what it lacks in scale, Santo António makes up for in pocket-sized grandeur. Dilapidated buildings, put up when the city was both islands' capital, line the bay in elegant pastels: a powder-blue school, pink government house and yellow post office. Neat Portuguese tiles surround a central square of weathered murals and

empty benches. A traveller's palm, its paddle-shaped leaves spanning four metres, dwarfs the government's assembly.

On the fringes of the town, mirrors hang above doorways of colourful stilt homes. They're placed there to reflect bad energy – a sign of a Santomean culture that blends Christianity with a rich seam of local ritual and superstition; where carved votives and herbal concoctions are embraced alongside gospel choirs and beach baptisms. →



The spiky green fruit of the sape-sape tree

ITS FRUITS ARE AS EXOTIC AS ANY IN THE CARIBBEAN

Matabala, jaca, cajá-manga, sape-sape, izaquente, fruta-pão, maquêqueê, micóco: Santomean fruit bears little resemblance to anything you might purchase in the exotic fruit section of your local supermarket. Breakfast buffets require an ID guide. Jaca is actually jackfruit, a bulging, dimpled fruit with deliciously sticky flesh. Sape-sape, with its prickly case and white pulpy insides, is elsewhere called soursop or mullatha, literally 'thorny custard apple'.

On the outskirts of São Tomé, women tend to roadside stalls, teasing out the fleshy innards of jackfruit and wrapping wild raspberries in porcelain-rose leaf cones. More familiar fruits pile up beside the exotic: papaya, pineapple, mango and seven varieties of banana, which local restaurants prepare in seemingly endless ways – ripe, raw, fried, boiled, dried and roasted.

The history of the 'cocoa islands' is written in these quick-growing plants. They were first imported to provide sustenance for slaves, brought in the 16th century to tend to sugarcane, then cash crops of cocoa and coffee. None was more important than spongy fruta-pão, or breadfruit. It originated in the South Pacific and can be fried, boiled, roasted or milled into flour. It's high in carbs, protein and vitamins, and one ball has enough nutrients to feed a family of five for a day. Today, this sweet or savoury staple is fried as fritters, used to mop up fish sauces and transformed into sticky puddings.

IT PRODUCES CHOCOLATE AS FINE AS SWITZERLAND'S

In 1908, São Tomé was the largest producer of cocoa in the world, with 800 plantations. But when the Portuguese left in 1975, the estates fell into decay. Today the remaining 150 'roças' are shadows of their former selves. Some have been reclaimed by the rainforest. Others have been taken over as homes, where children slide down Escher-like bannisters with unruly glee, bats roost above doorways, moss stains the walls and tiny goats frisk on crumbling steps.

Claudio Corallo's immaculate laboratory, on the edge of the capital, is poles apart. Neat rows of cardboard-packaged bars line the shelves, alongside metal scales and jars of candied ginger, orange peel and booze-soaked raisins. Beneath a glass dome, a vat of bubbling chocolate emits a faint fizzing sound. Claudio meticulously weighs out slabs of 75% cocoa, then stirs them into steaming water, pouring out a cup that's rich and fragrant without a hint of bitterness.

An avuncular Italian, who was clearly born with a moustache, he has a warm-hearted laugh and sprightly inventor's eyes. He has been called the best chocolate-maker on the planet – and yet he doesn't actually like chocolate. 'I'm a farmer, not a chocolatier,' he says. 'My work is in plantations, not in kitchens.' A reluctant celebrity, he is now the nation's only grower, maker and exporter of fine chocolate, sending his prized bars to high-end department stores and discerning chefs across the world. He likens it to the work of a carpenter. 'The secret isn't in the type of wood or the tools. It is in the work, experience and attention of the carpenter.'

● Claudio Corallo's lab is open for tours and tastings (£3.50; claudiocorallo.com). Omal Lodge's eight-hour 'East Coast Experience' guided tour includes visits to cocoa plantations (£85pp incl lunch; omalilodge.com).



The old sanzalas (living quarters) at Roça Água-Izé plantation



Cocoa beans ready for export. LEFT Processing the beans



Claudio Corallo's high-quality chocolate



Cups of Claudio's cocoa. LEFT A traveller's palm outside Roça Água-Izé

ITS WILDLIFE IS AS UNIQUE AS THE GALÁPAGOS'

After a few days, island wildlife encounters become casual, almost nonchalant. African grey parrots squabble in tree tops, snakes curl from branches, fruit bats fly overhead, languidly returning to roost, weaver birds knit their nests beside the road and tiny kingfishers with improbably long beaks teeter on roots.

The archipelago was never attached to mainland Africa, so it's no wonder it has more than its fair share of endemic species – given its size, it's comparable with the Galápagos and Hawaii. Some are an enduring mystery – science has no idea how the eight species of frog, with their intolerance of seawater and fast metabolisms, came to be here.

The Gulf of Guinea, in which the islands sit, also has a rich marine biodiversity. Humpback whales cavort off the coast and flying fish skim the waves. The deep waters harbour giants: blue marlin, weighing in at over 750kg, and 3m metallic blue Atlantic sailfish, with magnificent navy 'sails' running down their

spines. Four species of marine turtle nest on the islands – leatherback, green, hawksbill and olive ridley. Loggerheads have been seen hanging around, but are yet to come in to land.

It's nesting season on São Tomé and I take a night-time walk along Praia Grande to get closer. It proves to be an astounding yet nightmarish experience. Thousands of land crabs scuttle in and out of the red light of head torches. Some, the size of frisbees, lean back and brandish their enormous right-claws on our approach. At the end of a tractor-tread-like trail, a green turtle lies exhausted. In the past hour, she has hauled herself to the high tide line, dug a scrape and laid 120 eggs. 'They start hard like ping pong balls, then become soft,' conservationist Vanessa Schmett whispers, measuring the turtle's shell, then attaching a tag below her flipper. The turtle ignores her, exhales deeply, and begins to fling sand on her clutch. 'They have a hard start to life, but the hatchlings are resilient,' she says, leaning in to disentangle a flipper caught up in a palm leaf. Eventually, the turtle heaves herself back into the sea, quite oblivious to the smudgy line of the Milky Way emerging above.

● Whales are active from July to October; turtles nest from November and hatch in December. There is good birdwatching all year round. →



Known locally as 'cobra jita', this forest-dwelling snake is a subspecies of house snake found only on São Tomé. **INSET** The Principe kingfisher is also endemic to that island



Pico Cão Grande is an impressive and ever-present reminder of the island's volcanic origins



Scenes from the road that runs along the east coast of São Tomé

IT HAS A SKYSCRAPER AS BOLD AS DUBAI'S

Driving down São Tomé's remote east coast leads you past a string of fishing villages and black sand beaches. Women spread sheets out to dry on sun-bleached driftwood. Teenagers show off their surfing skills on battered foam boards, while school kids wave and shout 'ola!' and 'amiga' at passing pick-ups. Two young women walk down the centre of the road, carrying machetes and balancing cloth bags of fruit on their heads; one grins and asks in English: 'You are appreciating the nature of São Tomé? Welcome.'

With such warm greetings and easy conversations, it's impossible not to stop along the way, but light is fading and the goal is in sight – I'm keen to get a little

closer to the volcanic skyscraper that towers over the island. It is almost always shrouded in mist. Pico Cão Grande (Portuguese for 'great dog peak') is a 668m phonolithic rock tower, pushing rudely out of the rainforest in São Tomé's southern hinterland. This is the island's ultimate high-rise: the most splendid of the many volcanic plugs that skewer the archipelago, formed when magma solidified inside the vent of a volcano. It appears unexpectedly from many points of São Tomé: rising monumentally at the end of a straight road, framed within the verdant monotony of a palm oil plantation, or emerging from the dense canopy like something out of Middle Earth.

When I reach the perfect vantage point on a steep corner of the road, the haze unexpectedly clears and a golden light drenches the Pico, turning the surrounding sea of foliage a dazzling green. A hush descends; other than the odd chirrup of a weaver bird, the only sound is the soft tread of flip-flops, as a man ambles home along the road. 'Tudo bem?' he asks – am I well? 'Léve, léve,' I reply and he grins. 🇵🇹



JO KEELING is editor and founder of *Ernest Journal* and co-author of *The Odditorium*.

She is also a freelance writer, editor and festival curator with a penchant for slow travel, long rambles and sea swimming.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE & AWAY

TAP Portugal flies from London to São Tomé via Lisbon. The flight stops briefly at Accra, Ghana (from £780; flytap.com).

GETTING AROUND

Car hire (4WD) on São Tomé costs around £35–£40 per day. When you consider potholes, power cuts and potential language barriers, hiring a car with a driver is often a better option and costs around £18 per day. You can arrange car hire, drivers and guides through your hotel. For car hire with or without a driver, try Hanna & Silva Lda Rent a Car (facebook.com/hannaesilvarentacar; 00 239 222 6282). Most locals get around in shared yellow taxis.

A twin-propeller plane makes the 40-minute hop between São Tomé and Príncipe five times a week (from £160; stpairways.st). If heading to Príncipe, try to get a seat on the left-hand side to see this tiny forested island emerge out of the mist like the Lost World. Delays are not uncommon, so plan an extra day between your departure from Príncipe and your return flight home.

FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Africa* guide (£22.99) features a chapter on São Tomé and Príncipe; or download the section as a PDF (£2.99) at shop.lonelyplanet.com. *As Roças de São Tomé e Príncipe* is a beautiful coffee table book exploring the islands' crumbling plantation buildings; (£28; asrocasdesao tome.com).



TOUR OPERATORS

An 11-day trip to São Tomé and Príncipe costs from £2,745pp, on a half-board basis, with **Rainbow Tours** (rainbowtours.co.uk; 020 3733 6778). The tour includes a three-night stay at Omali Lodge on São Tomé, to explore the island in a 4WD and drop in on old coffee and cocoa plantations. You can also go in search of rare birds, such as the dwarf olive ibis and São Tomé grosbeak. The rest of your time is spent on Príncipe, where you can kayak through mangrove forests, watch whales off the coast and hike through rainforest to swim in hidden coves. The price includes return flights to São Tomé with TAP Portugal via Lisbon.



BEHIND THE SCENES

At Roça Água-Izé, two ramshackle hospitals have been taken over as homes. As we pulled up, children ran out, led us up the ornate staircase, braided my hair and slid down the banisters. Their joy was infectious and soon we were all giggling. *Jo Keeling*



MAP KEY

- 1 Claudio Corallo's laboratory
- 2 Pico Cão Grande
- 3 Pico Papagaio
- 4 Praia Banana
- 5 Praia Grande (São Tomé)
- 6 Roça São João
- 7 Santo António

WHERE TO STAY

- 1 Bom Bom Island Resort
- 2 Mucumbli
- 3 Omali Lodge
- 4 Pensão Residencial Palhota

SÃO TOMÉ



PLACE TO STAY

Omalil Lodge is a sight for sore eyes after a long flight, with its natural pool and waterfall surrounded by impossibly tall palms and beaming bartenders. In the hotel restaurant expect a Santomean spin on Portuguese dishes with 95 per cent local ingredients: dorado fish burger with a squid ink bun, local sugar cane



spirits and bras de grouper – a traditional Portuguese dish usually made with cod and potato, here with grouper and grated manioc. Rooms are simple and refined, with exposed brickwork, spacious bathrooms and a balcony or courtyard overlooking the pool (rooms from £135, mains from £8; omalilodge.com).

Named after a magical tree, **Mucumbli** has six wooden chalets overlooking the ocean. The dark-sand beach is a 10-minute walk away, or you can join an organised bike tour of the island. The Italian owners serve hearty pasta dishes (rooms from £60; mucumbli.wordpress.com).



PLACE TO EAT

Sit on the veranda overlooking the rainforest at **Casa Museu Almada Negreiros**. For £10, you can try a tasting menu of local dishes such as fried swordfish with okra and aubergine, and rice with 'mosquito herb' (facebook.com/casamuseualmada-negreiros). **Papa Figo** is a popular terrace snack bar in the capital dishing up an incredible choice of fish (mains from £3; Avenida Kwame Nkrumah).



PRÍNCIPE



PLACE TO STAY

At **Bom Bom Island Resort** you can have your pick of 19 red stilt bungalows, perched on the beach or poised above tree roots. The rooms are bright and comfortable, rather than luxurious, complete with four-poster beds hung with muslin, soft leather sofas and woven palm leaf lamp shades. There are two long beaches – Praia Santa Rita on the east side is better for snorkelling. The most memorable part of your stay will be your twice-daily walk to the restaurant across a Swiss Family Robinson-style stilt walkway (left). At night, the journey is even more magical as you're drawn towards the restaurant's candlelit tables while the tide washes beneath you (rooms from £315; bombomprincipe.com).



Pensao Residencial Palhota is a modest, family-run guesthouse in the centre of Santo António with 10

simple rooms, a communal lounge and the bamboo Falkiri restaurant (rooms from £65; pensaopalhota@costome.net; 00 239 225 1060).

PLACE TO EAT

The owners of Bom Bom have also renovated **Roça Sundry**, an old plantation house in the north of the island. Dine in a bamboo restaurant on Praia Sundry, tucking into locally sourced produce, or have a barefoot BBQ by the pool. A room at the Roça is £85 (hotelrocasundry.com).



Rosa Pão in Santo António is midway between a restaurant and host Rosita's front room. Try traditional dishes such as molho no fogo (fish and vegetable stew), peixe limão (lemon fish), pintado de coco (fish cooked in coconut milk) and obobo – a bean and onion dish (mains from £3).



Cabin fever

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SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The Kicking Horse River
flows past Canada's
Cathedral Mountain Lodge
and its namesake peak



Little Bear

WEST SUSSEX, ENGLAND



WHERE AM I HEADING?

Amid the woods and meadows of the western Weald, Little Bear is a cabin comfortably big enough for two, and far enough from city lights that its namesake constellation should be a familiar presence on cloudless nights.

There is no drive-up road to the property, and guests use a wheelbarrow to take their bags on the short woodland walk from the nearest parking. The result is a feeling of true seclusion that's rare in England's southeast.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

Under the tin roof is an open-plan, wood-beamed space containing a king-size bed, kitchen, sofa, gas woodburner and a dining table for two built on an old sewing machine treadle. The shower room is more boutique hotel than lumberjack-standard, and a ladder leads up to a snug with furry beanbags under the eaves. Just outside is a cedar-wood hot-tub with overhanging bamboo for a Japanese touch, and wooden benches circling a fire-pit (inset). Guests get a welcome hamper on arrival, containing both essentials and luxuries: milk, eggs, pâté, prosecco and more.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

The exact location is kept a secret until booking is confirmed, but the woods around are especially fine for yomps in autumn and in bluebell season. (from £895 for a three-night weekend stay or four-night weekday stay; uniquehomestays.com)



Stadl in Altenbach

STYRIA, AUSTRIA



WHERE AM I HEADING?

On the very southern edge of Austria, within yodelling distance of the Slovenian border, Stadl in Altenbach is an inventive architectural hybrid perched on a hillside with wide-reaching views. It's one of a handful of houses in the area belonging to the PuresLEBEN collection.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

An original wood-and-stone farmhouse built out in modern Alpine style (lots of glass, lots of clean lines) into a supremely comfortable hideaway for two. A chunky, white-plastered oven, freestanding bath, large picture windows, and a wide wooden deck with a lap pool and plunge-pool are among the attractive features around the house. A separate sauna on the terrace allows guests to practise the Finnish ritual of alternating between hot and cold in an Austrian Alpine setting.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

The house overlooks a region known as Steirische Toskana (Styrian Tuscany) for its mix of vineyards and rolling hills. Styria is also well known in Austria for its pumpkin-seed oil, which is bound to feature on local restaurant menus. (from £220; puresleben.at)



Swinton Bivouac

NORTH YORKSHIRE, ENGLAND



WHERE AM I HEADING?

The six Tree Lodges at Swinton Bivouac are hidden within one of the scattered stands of forest on the otherwise open hills of Colsterdale, just beyond the eastern limit of Yorkshire Dales National Park. It's part of Swinton Park, a 20,000-acre estate.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

Each Tree Lodge sleeps up to seven, with two double beds and three singles. Raised slightly off the ground, the cabins have front porches fenced in with artfully irregular branches, and containing

that much-sought-after feature, a dedicated welly-stand. The clapboard interior has a delightfully rustic feel, as though a carpenter has conjured it up out of the surrounding forest. At the front is a kitchenette with range and gas hob, and hot water heated by wood burner. The back of the cabin has a triple split-level sleeping area reached by ladders, with bed alcoves that can be curtained off – a likely favourite with kids. The lodges are not supplied with electricity, so pack a torch alongside your spirit of adventure. There's a shared wood-fired hot-tub on the site, and also a café that's open for breakfast, lunch and weekend evenings.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

The forest is home to the Druid's Temple, a folly inspired by Stonehenge. The Yorkshire Dales rise up to the west, while just to the east is the small market town of Masham, with two breweries. (from £184; bivouac.swintonestate.com) →



Newhaus

BALTIC COAST, GERMANY



WHERE AM I HEADING?

To the seaside! The two houses of Newhaus sit in a pine forest near the beach on the Baltic coast, with the resort town of Dierhagen within ambling distance.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

Haus Sand (three bedrooms) and Haus Pine (four bedrooms) see the cabin reinvented in modern-German style, with pale wood floorboards, clean lines, designer furniture, contemporary artwork and tech galore. More rustic appeal comes in the form of saunas and outdoor terraces, complete with firepits, deckchairs and blankets.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

The houses are close to the Darss-Zingst peninsula, home to wide, sandy beaches ripe for a blustery wander. Dierhagen has plenty of restaurants and produce shops. (from £195 per day, minimum one-week in high season; newhaus.de)

Cathedral Mountain Lodge

BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA



WHERE AM I HEADING?

Kicking Horse Pass is one of the key gateways through the Rocky Mountains, where the Canadian Pacific Railway crosses from Alberta into British Columbia on its transcontinental journey. Just west of there, Cathedral Mountain Lodge has 23 luxury log cabins in the shadow of the majestic 3,187-metre mountain from which it takes its name.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

The 23 log cabins are about as smart as it's possible to get before they no longer count as log cabins. Inside, the timber walls are adorned with vintage snowshoes and skis, and fireplaces are built of rounded riverbed rocks. This isn't the place for a self-catering holiday – grocery stores are thin on the ground in the immediate surroundings in any case – but in the lodge's main building guests can sit down to the likes of Arctic char or herb-roasted pheasant. The lodge also provides packed lunches for hikers.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

Yoho National Park begins on the doorstep, its peaks, forests and waterfalls covering 507 square miles.

(from £215; cathedralmountainlodge.com)



Birkedal

MØN, DENMARK



WHERE AM I HEADING?

If you were to deconstruct the concept of the log cabin for the 21st century, you might end up with something like Birkedal. Nine interlocking cylinders covered in spruce logs stand on the edge of the beachside community of Råbylille Strand, on Denmark's Baltic Sea island of Møn.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

Sparse white-and-wood interiors are softened with long-furred throw rugs, carefully placed windows to let in the pale northern light, the polished-brass glow from kitchen and bathroom surfaces, and curves in every room. There are three double bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living room and a well-equipped kitchen – though one that you may feel guilty creating a mess in. The website is entirely in German, the childhood tongue of Birkedal's architect, but the spirit at work is very much modern Scandinavian.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

Long, sandy beaches begin just a few hundred yards away. Møn, connected by a bridge to larger Zealand, is an island of white cliffs, painted medieval churches and mysterious ancient burial mounds. (one week's hire Saturday to Saturday from £820; hausaufmoen.de)

Ty Donkey

BRECON BEACONS, WALES

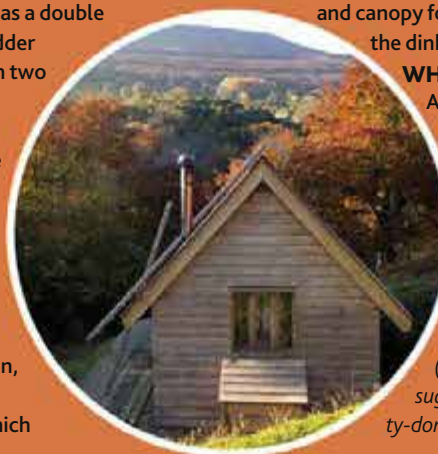


WHERE AM I HEADING?

On a hillside flanking the Black Mountains, in the east of Brecon Beacons National Park, Ty Donkey is a two-part charmer that's off the grid, but not the plumbing.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

The oak-built cabin has a double platform bed up a ladder under the eaves, with two bunk beds for under eights. Under the same roof is a lounge area with sofa, chairs, sheepskin rugs, log-burning stove and board games. A few yards uphill is a tin-roofed, recycled railway cabin, also kitted out with wooden interiors, which



houses the kitchen and bathroom. A fire pit and canopy for outside dining complete the dinky set-up.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

A mountain river runs below the fields grazed by Lily and Dida, the cabin's donkey mascots. Crickhowell town is three miles away, with many good independent shops, and some of the country's finest walks run all around.

(three nights from £380; sugarandloaf.com/cottages/ty-donkey) ➔





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The Barn in Tivoli

NEW YORK STATE, USA



WHERE AM I HEADING?

Sleeping up to six people in three bedrooms, the Barn in Tivoli is the more rustic counterpart to a house in the Hudson Valley, just over two hours' drive north from New York City.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

Wood grain in assorted shades and finishes sets the tone, with geometric-patterned rugs, a claw-foot bathtub, mismatched furniture and wall-mounted pieces of bone or antler giving it all the feel of a long-established second-home. Downstairs there's a rough-hewn but well-equipped kitchen, piano and day-bed. Upstairs is a library and open-plan sitting room (pictured left) with bedrooms giving off it, partitioned by curtains, plus a loft room. The seasons decide whether you use the inside or outside showers, and if you roll open the barn door for spring freshness or feed the wood-burning stove when the snow is piled thick outside.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

Within the four-acre grounds you'll discover a meadow, fire pits, a picnic table by a pond, and a yoga platform overlooking Stoney Creek, which also has a swimming hole. Crossing the bridge over the creek, the centre of Tivoli is a quarter-mile walk away, with a large array of eateries for a village of its size. North and south of Tivoli are the landscapes made famous in the 19th century by the painters of the Hudson River School. You can also visit Olana – a splendid mansion built by one of the movement's founders.

(from £209; thebarnintivoli.com)

Manshausen

NORDLAND, NORWAY



WHERE AM I HEADING?

Manshausen is well above the Arctic Circle, set on its own 55-acre island – one of thousands that dot this remote stretch of the northern Norwegian coast. Once part of an old trading post, the island has a small selection of sleeping options, the best of which are three sea cabins built along the stone jetty, with a fourth set a bit higher up the hill behind.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

The sea cabins look like Space Age visitors tentatively settled on the landscape, the boxes sometimes jutting out over the water. There are no log walls, but rather immaculately planed blonde wood. Wraparound windows look out onto rocky fjordland landscapes, or the northern lights in the depths of winter. The two-bedroom cabins have small kitchens, though breakfast is served in the main house, and other meals can be taken there depending on the season.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

There are few settings more epic than Norway's coastal fringe, with the Kystriksveien driving route beginning south of Manshausen and running for some 400 miles.

(sea cabins from £300; manshausen.no) →



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Candlewood

WISCONSIN, USA



WHERE AM I HEADING?

Wisconsin's Richland County is a honeycomb of backroads, farms and wooded hills. In its midst, you'll find the original Candlewood cabin, welcoming guests for over 20 years, as well as four newer and quite different offerings.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

The Glass House (main picture) has done away with the log walls of the traditional cabin and, as its name suggests, replaced them with glass, meaning guests can loiter in bed and peer out at any passing woodland critters. The Meadow House and Woodland House also hew towards the 21st century with their quirky design. If 'classic' is more your cup of tea, try the Hillside Cabin (inset), the first to be built, or the Log Cabin, with a porch complete with rocking chair. All have kitchens or kitchenettes and outdoor fire-pits as standard.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

There are abundant spots for hiking, canoeing and trout-fishing in the surrounding hills and rivers. Taliesin, architect Frank Lloyd Wright's landmark house, is a 30-minute drive away. (from £130; candlewoodcabins.com)



PHOTOGRAPHS: PETER GODSHALL, © STEFANO SCATÀ

San Luis

SOUTH TYROL, ITALY



WHERE AM I HEADING?

Not to a Hispanic country, despite the name of the lodge, but to a mostly German-speaking part of the Italian Alps. On a shoulder of the valley of the Adige (or Etsch), more than a thousand metres above its vineyards, San Luis is a cabin village in miniature set around a small lake.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

The lodge-style arrangement is more North American than European, with chalets and treehouses radiating from a central clubhouse, but the architecture and styling are in keeping with the Alpine surrounds. That said, the cabins built high among the pine needles opt out of the folksy aesthetic that

comes as standard in hotels across the Alps, letting natural wood textures, floor-to-ceiling windows, and plain fabrics do the talking. Artwork is sparing, often just a couple of framed leaf prints on the wall. Individual kitchenettes are included among the facilities, but aside from breakfast – which is served directly in the cabins – most guests prefer to dine in the main lodge building, where the Alpine cooking has a Mediterranean influence befitting the culture-straddling region where San Luis is based. Also noteworthy is the timber-framed indoor pool that appears to join seamlessly with the lake and heated outdoor pool. The latter is particularly special on a snowy day, with steam rising off it.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

Four miles away, down the mountain slope, is the town of Merano (Meran in German), which has a sunny microclimate that drew well-heeled visitors in the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Castel Trauttmansdorff's botanical gardens were a favourite of the Empress 'Sisi'. (from £235; sanluis-hotel.com) →





Eagle Brae

INVERNESS-SHIRE, SCOTLAND



WHERE AM I HEADING?

The Scottish Highlands are calling. The seven lodges of Eagle Brae perch on a hillside up a secluded track a few miles from the handsome riverside town of Beauly, with far-reaching views out over the valley of Strathglass.

WHAT WILL I FIND THERE?

Eagle Brae takes its commitment to the log cabin of popular imagination very seriously. Each of its lodges is a veritable festival of wood. The sturdy walls and staircases are hewn from the giant trunks of red cedars hand-crafted in British Columbia, and each celebrates the quirks of their natural state, retaining the hollows and branches of the trees from which they came. New, manmade additions come in the form of fish, eagles and deer carved into their surfaces. The terrace is also an all-wood affair, and is likely where you'll spend much of your time, endlessly staring at the landscape. The look may be 'pioneer' but the lifestyle most certainly is not; the cabins come with fully-equipped kitchens, Smart TVs, wifi, a wood-burning stove and underfloor heating. A welcome basket that includes whisky, Highland crackers, shortbread and Black Isle beer comes as standard, and venison burgers, pork and lamb are available to buy from the reception.

WHAT'S OUTSIDE?

Peer out at any moment and you'll very often come face-to-face with red deer, who descend from the surrounding forests to drink at the site's pond. There are plenty of walking trails winding out from Eagle Brae, and local fishing trips, photo safaris and kayaking can be arranged too. Guests should take the advice of owners Pawanna and Mike and leave their hillside domain to drive to Glen Stathfarrar, a private valley that's home to golden eagles and very few humans. The lodge will provide binoculars and Thermos flasks for the endeavour. For dinner, head to the Struy Inn a couple of miles from Eagle Brae; *do not* miss out the Wellington of haggis and Isle of Mull cheddar, and quite possibly the best chips in Scotland.

(various price options, including two-person cabin £580 for two nights and six-person cabin £1,426 for one week; three new lodges are being built between May and November 2018, with a 20% discount on all cabins at this time; eaglebrae.co.uk)





KENTUCKY

UNCORKED

The Bluegrass State: home of the Derby, bourbon and now Statesman – the secret society at the heart of the new film *Kingsman: The Golden Circle*. Your visit to Kentucky could be just as unforgettable

When it comes to classic American film locations, there are the usual suspects, like Los Angeles, say, in *The Usual Suspects*. New York and Las Vegas may also spring to mind, but it's the lesser-spotted Kentucky that plays host to the thrilling denouement of *Kingsman: The Golden Circle*.

Kingsman: The Secret Service introduced the world to Kingsman – an independent, international intelligence agency operating at the highest level of discretion. In the sequel, Kingsman's London headquarters are destroyed, forcing it to band together with its Kentucky-based counterpart, Statesman. Together, they bid to save the world from a common enemy.

But don't worry if your idea of a great American getaway is slightly less cloak and dagger; the real-life Kentucky is a varied, vibrant destination, whose culture is largely defined by the need to have a good time. Read on for a few ideas of how to find it.

Horses

Churchill Downs in the state's largest city, Louisville, is home to one of the most recognised horse meets in the world: the Kentucky Derby. The race is at the centre of Kentuckian culture, where all matters of an equine persuasion are taken very seriously.

What to do: The two-week-long annual Kentucky Derby Festival concludes on the first Saturday of May, but if you can't make it there, Lexington, also known as 'horse country', is peppered with farms that offer tours around their grounds, so you can see prize thoroughbreds up close, all year round.

Music

Every state has its own well-earned moniker, and Kentucky is no different, thanks to its distinctive grass, which grows to produce blue-tinted flowers. Bluegrass also named a music scene that continues to thrive in the state and beyond today.

What to do: Summertime in Kentucky sees several festivals spring up across the state, including Bluegrass extravaganza ROMP Fest in Owensboro, and the eclectic Master Musicians Festival in Somerset, as well as Forecastle in Louisville, which has attracted the likes of The Black Keys and Outkast in recent years.

Bourbon

Kentucky distilleries provide 95% of the world's bourbon, so if a mint julep is one of your favoured tipples, the state's Bourbon Trail is an essential itinerary.

What to do: Louisville distillery Old Forester's new bourbon, Old Forester Statesman, has been specially crafted for the release of *Kingsman: The Golden Circle*. The whiskey is sourced from hand-selected barrels and matured in the warmest spots in the Old Forester warehouse. Find out how you can sample it at oldforester.com/bourbons/statesman, or head to the distillery while you're there.



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The Photographer's Story

THIBAUD POIRIER

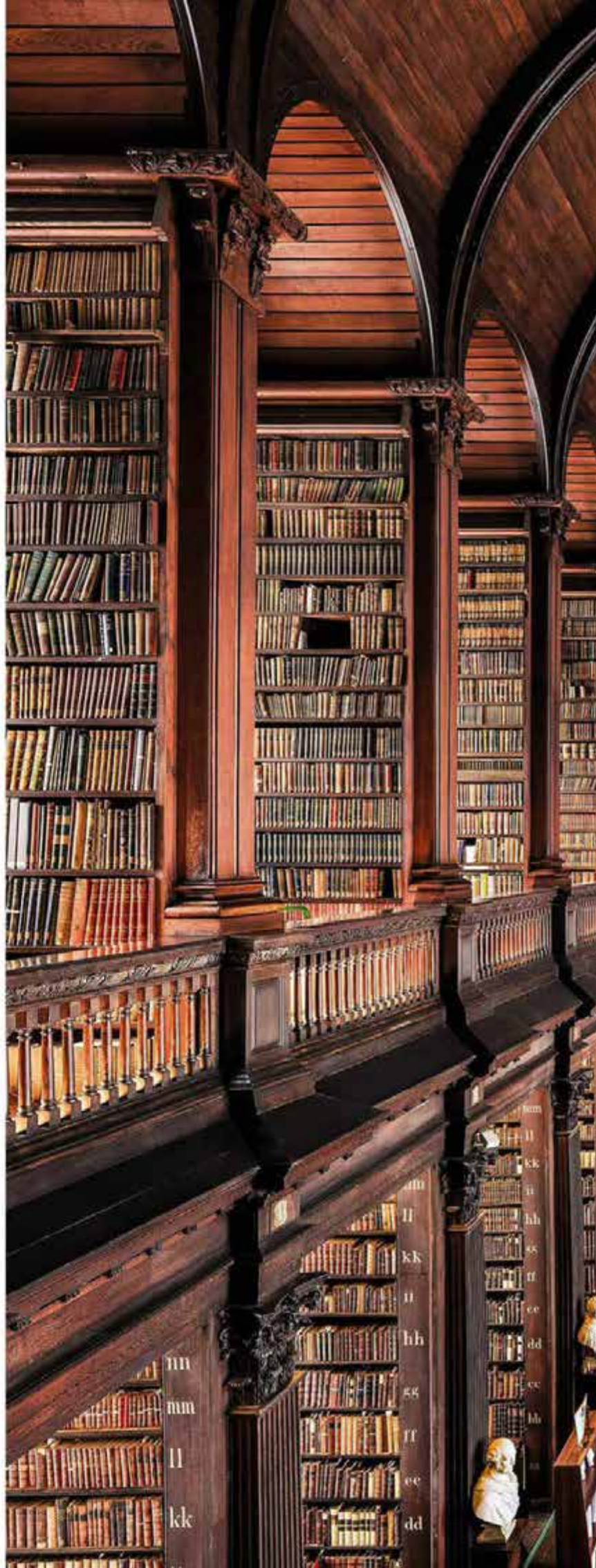


Quiet please

In the past two years, I've photographed 18 libraries in 10 cities. I've always liked architectural photography and wanted to make a themed project; I chose libraries as I was interested in looking back through history and seeing how these buildings, all designed for the same purpose, were so different across time and place.

When I was younger, I didn't really like reading, and even as a student I didn't study in libraries, but this project gave me a way to travel with a certain focus. I visited libraries dating from the 1600s and others built in the past decade; some were built for studying, others for storing books. Many of them were beautiful, historical buildings made by famous architects of the period – back when they were built, books were the best way to transmit knowledge and cities would spend a lot of money on libraries that would stand the test of time. It was fascinating to explore these important places of knowledge, aware that people had come to them every day for centuries. I usually visited in the morning before they opened. Since I got permission beforehand, I'd often get to meet the library's director or a staff member who would tell me its stories – a fascinating private visit. It could feel intimidating to be alone in a place that's usually so full of people, but I was also aware of just how lucky I was. →

THIBAUD POIRIER is a travel and architectural photographer based in Paris. Find more of his work on Instagram (@tibman) and thibaudpoirier.com.



'I had 15 minutes to shoot Dublin's famous 16th-century Trinity College Library, home to the 9th-century *Book of Kells*, before hundreds of visitors streamed in.'





ABOVE 'In the reading room of Berlin's Jacob-und-Wilhelm-Grimm-Zentrum, built in 2009, all the tables look inward – so everyone is facing the best view.'
 BELOW 'The 18th-century Joanina Library in Coimbra, near Porto, is a mash-up of cultural references, from an Italianate ceiling to Chinese-inspired balconies.'



CREDIT: THIBAUD POIRIER, JACOB-UND-WILHELM-GRIMM-ZENTRUM, UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN



ABOVE 'I've never seen anything like Stuttgart's Stadtbibliothek, opened in 2011 – its Escher-like staircases and all-white colour are unique.'
 BELOW 'Rome's Casanatense library dates from 1701, making it one of Italy's oldest. It's an important resource for Roman history, as well as theology.' →



CREDIT: CITY LIBRARY STUTTGART / MARCHITECTS



'When I visited the Labrouste Reading Room of the National Library of France in Paris, it had just been restored to its 1870s splendour. Its arches and domes are hand-painted – the building is a source of national pride.'

Q&A

Thibaud Poirier tells us about his most memorable moments and the secrets he's uncovered when photographing libraries

STRANGEST LIBRARY?

Joanina library, Coimbra (below), because of the different quirks it has. The library director showed me the hidden staircases and the ladders built into the wall – you can press a button and they pop out. There are



all these different features that you don't see in the main photo – the designers were really trying to invent modern things.

MOST MEMORABLE ENCOUNTER?

The director of Joanina library – he was kind enough to give me two hours after we had lunch. Sometimes a contact would say, 'take your time, I'll be in my office', but he didn't.

MOST SURPRISING CITY?

I really liked Rome – I shot two libraries there. I loved how the city is packed with history. The oldest library for my series is in Rome – it's hundreds of years old.



WHERE WILL YOU RETURN?

The Oval Room (left), which is the reading room at the National Library of France in Paris. If you look, you see the shelves but there are no books, because when I shot it they were about to start

renovation. It's going to be closed until 2020; when it opens again, I want to go back to take a picture.

DID YOU TAKE ANY RISKS?

When shooting, I'd usually ask to go on tiny little ladders, rails and balconies to get a higher vantage point. I would be told to be careful, which of course I am.

MOST SPECIAL MOMENT?

At a lot of these libraries, I would shoot public areas then leave, but in Coimbra I got access to the underground storage area (right) and the director showed me rare books that are really old. You don't usually get to see them. They also had a collection of old maps; I really like old maps, so that was pretty cool.

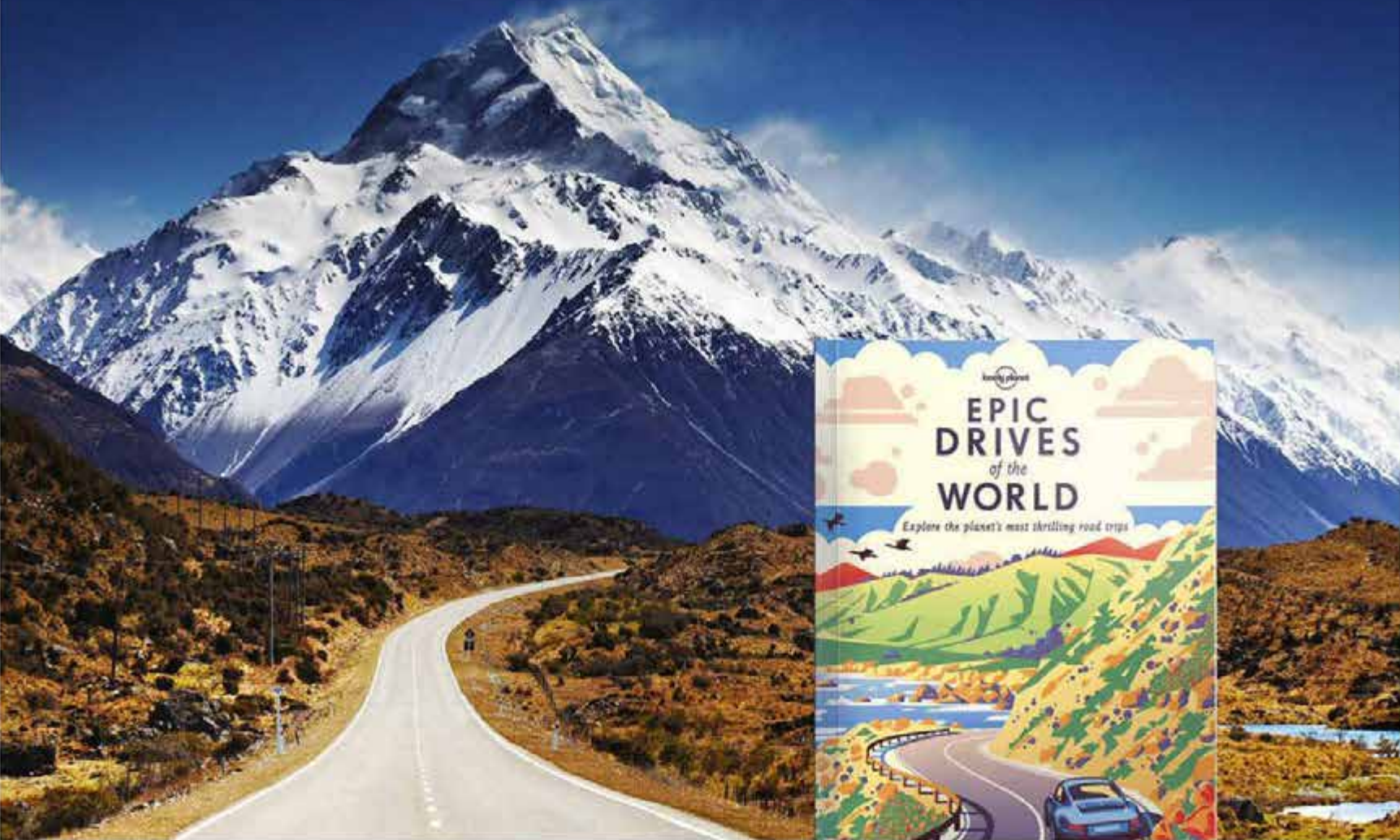


WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

This was my first big project on a single theme. With all my other projects, I usually go to a place, take photos for a week and then I'm done. When I started this project, I thought I could photograph libraries without permission; go early in the morning and shoot the best photo I could get. But after a couple of attempts, I realised that it would be hard to get access without permission from the library. So it was a learning process to understand what it takes to get a project of that scale done.

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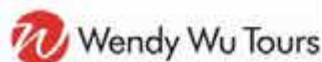
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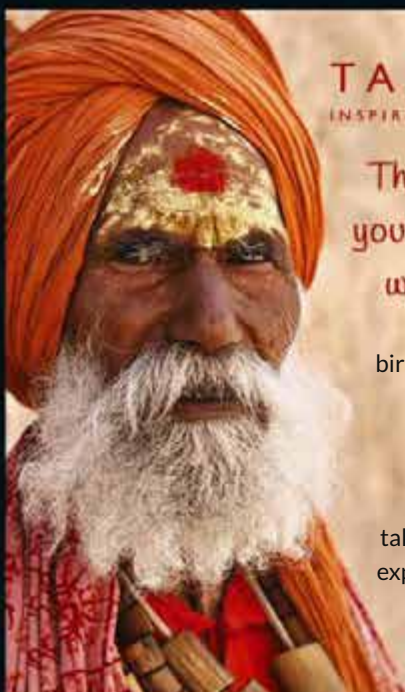


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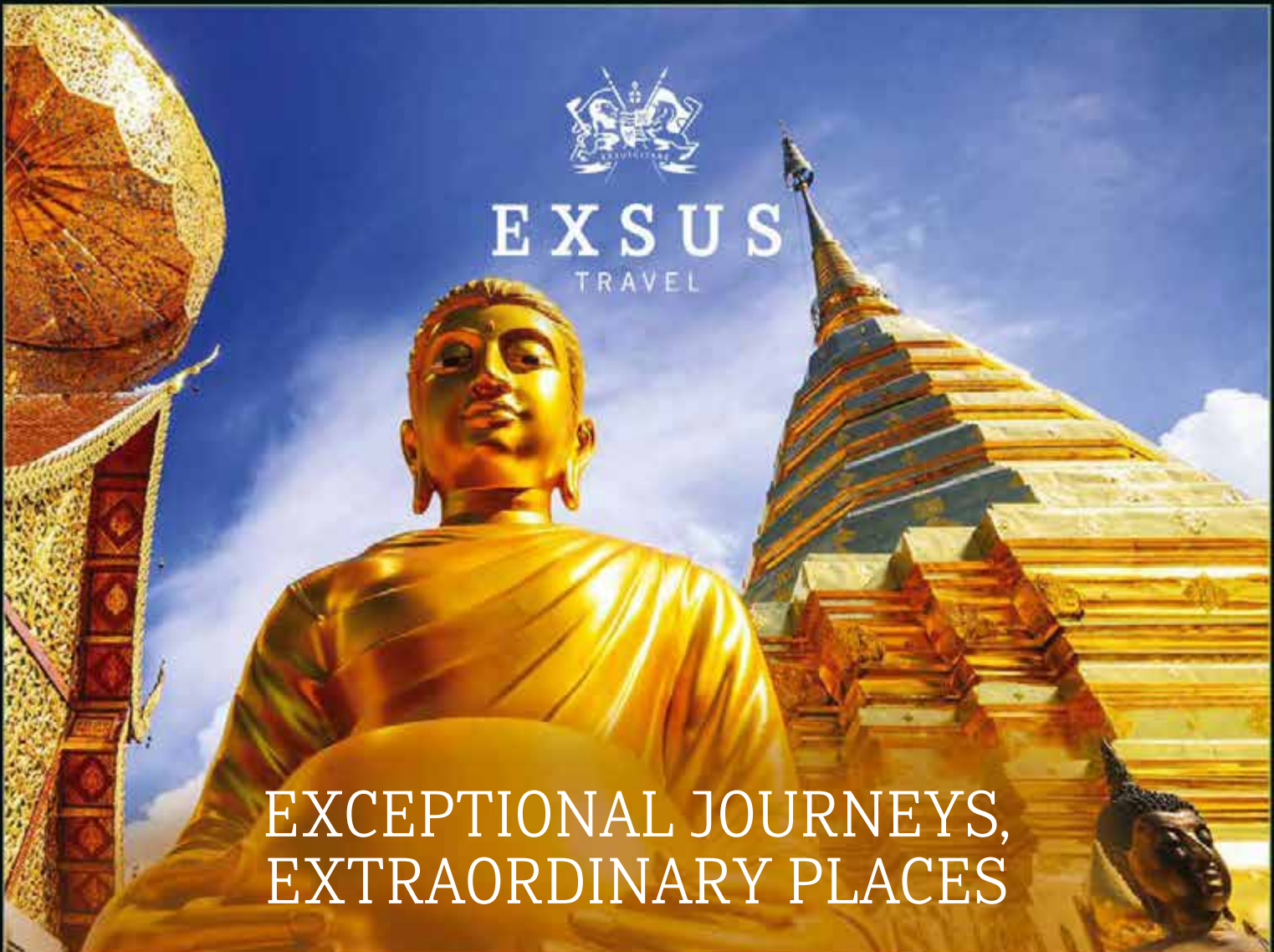
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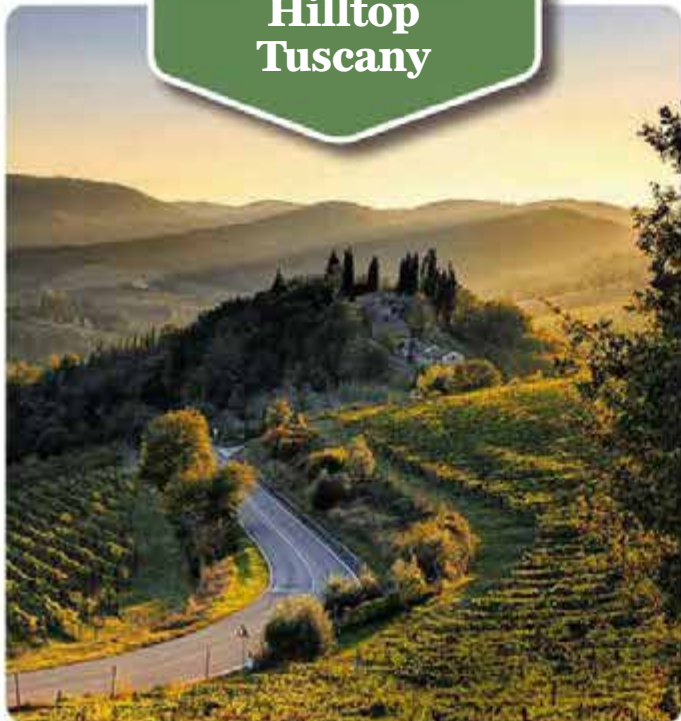
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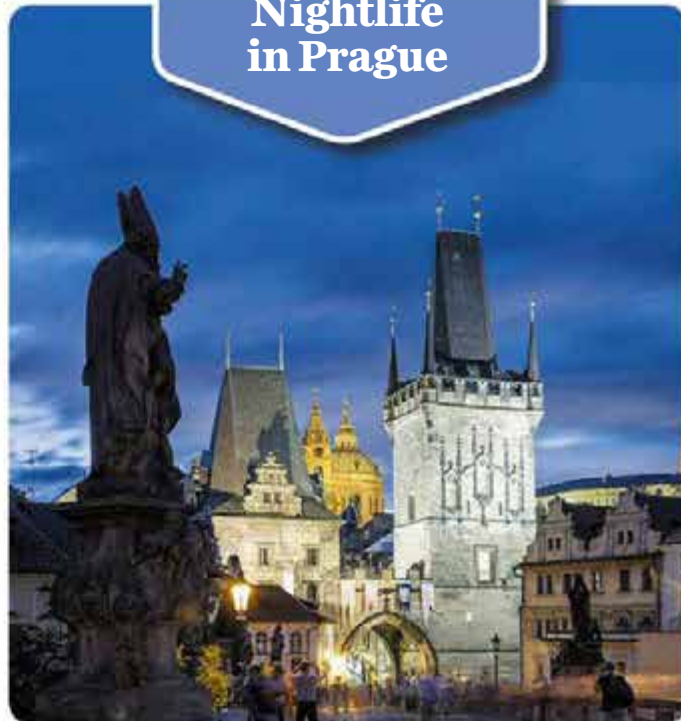
Top Picks

Jump right in with one of our specially themed guides. Each features the best local experiences in cities or regions selected by our travel experts – set off with a Top Picks guide right now or collect them for your future trips.

Hilltop Tuscany



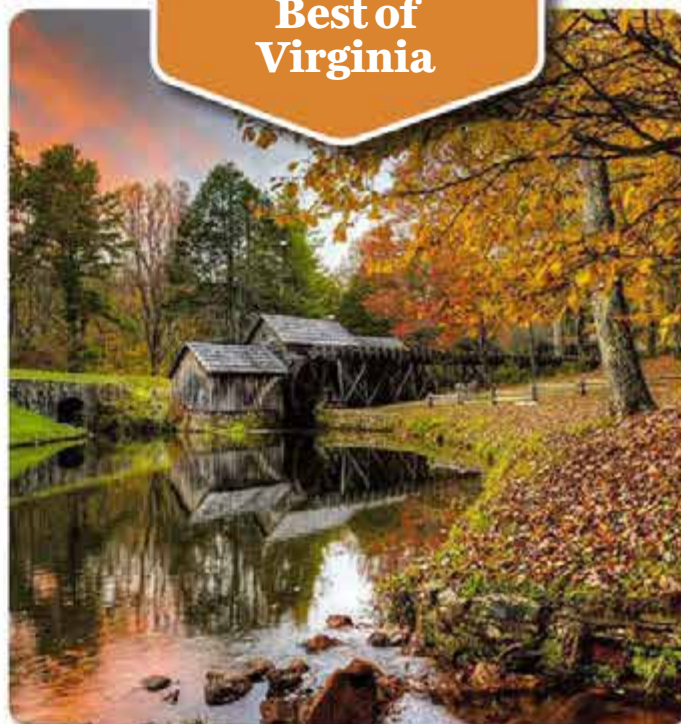
Nightlife in Prague



Eating in Singapore



Best of Virginia



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Hilltop Tuscany



A road through the vines in the northern Chianti region

Looking at Tuscany's classic landscapes, you might think the hills were arranged on purpose. Take in the best sights, restaurants and more in this Italian region's medieval hilltop towns and along its snaking roads.

SIGHTS

Collegiata

(duomosangimignano.it; Piazza del Duomo, San Gimignano)

San Gimignano's Romanesque cathedral houses frescoes depicting episodes from the Old and New Testaments. Look out, too, for the Cappella di Santa Fina, near the main altar – a Renaissance chapel adorned with naive and touching works by Domenico Ghirlandaio. These featured in Franco Zeffirelli's 1999 film *Tea with Mussolini*.

Palazzo Pubblico

(comune.siena.it; Piazza del Campo, Siena)

Built to demonstrate Siena's huge wealth, this 14th-century Gothic masterpiece is the visual focal point of the Campo – the city's main square. Inside, the Museo Civico showcases rooms richly

frescoed by artists of the Siennese school. Commissioned by the city's governing body rather than by the Church, some of the frescoes depict secular subjects. Highlights are Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegories of Good and Bad Government* (c. 1338–40) and Simone Martini's *Maestà* (Virgin Mary in Majesty; 1315).

Pitigliano

(comune.pitigliano.gr.it)

Sprouting from a volcanic rocky outcrop towering over the surrounding country, this hilltop town is surrounded by gorges, constituting a natural bastion. Within the town, stairways disappear around corners, cobbled alleys bend out of sight beneath graceful arches and reminders of the town's once-considerable Jewish community remain in the

form of a 16th-century synagogue and a unique Jewish local cuisine.

Museo Etrusco Guarnacci

(museivaldicecina.it; Via Don Minzoni 15, Volterra) In the ridge-top town of Volterra is one of Italy's most impressive collections of Etruscan art, from the civilisation that preceded the Romans. The *Urn of the Spesi* is a realistic terracotta rendering of an elderly couple. Other highlights are a crested helmet from the Tomba del Guerruccia, and *L'Ombra della Sera* (Shadow of the Evening), a bronze nude figure that resembles the work of Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti.

Santuario della Verna

(laverna.it; Chiusi della Verna)

This remote Franciscan monastic complex is where St Francis of Assisi is said to have received the stigmata and is a major pilgrimage destination. The Corridoio delle Stimmate, decorated with modern frescoes recounting St Francis' life, leads to the Cappella delle Stimmate, built in 1263 on the spot where the saint received the stigmata two years before his death, aged 44. The monumental *Crucifixion* by Andrea della Robbia here is magnificent.

ACTIVITIES

Bagni San Filippo

Those who like hot-water frolics can head nine miles south of Bagno Vignoni along the SR2 to this village, where there are thermal cascades in an open-air reserve.

You'll find these just uphill from Hotel le Terme, the village's only hotel – follow a path marked 'Fosso Bianco' for about 150m to limestone outcrops and you'll come to a set of warm tumbling cascades that get more spectacular the further downhill you walk.

Cave di Marmo Tours

(cavedimarmotours.com)

Get set for the off-road ride of your life in a Land Rover Defender along the perilously steep gravel tracks used by lorries to zigzag up and down Carrara's famed marble mountain, transporting blocks between the quarry and the workshops. Guided tours start by the motorway exit in Carrara town, last 2½ hours and must be reserved in advance.

Via Panoramica

(monteargentario.info)

Signs point you towards this narrow route that encircles the entire Monte Argentario promontory. It offers sweeping sea views across to the hazy whaleback of the Isola del Giglio. The road can get dangerously busy in summer.

EATING

Gelateria Dondoli

(gelateriadipiazza.com; Piazza della Cisterna 4, San Gimignano)

Think of it less as ice cream, more as art. Sergio Dondoli is a member of Italy's Ice Cream World Championship team and among his most famous creations are Crema di Santa Fina (saffron cream) gelato and Vernaccia sorbet.

Off the beaten track

There's a certain romance to touring Tuscany on the back of a Vespa, Italy's iconic scooter, which revolutionised travel when Piaggio launched it in 1946. The 'wasp', as the two-wheeled utility vehicle was affectionately known, has been restyled 120 times since, yet the essential design remains timeless. The complete Vespa story is grippingly told in Pontedera's Museo Piaggio (museopiaggio.it), in a former factory building. Should Vespa's carefree spirit take hold, hook up with **Tuscany by Vespa** (tuscanybyvespa.com) for your very own Hepburn-style Vespa tour, on a six-hour loop from Florence through vineyards and olive groves.



Il LeccioTUSCAN ££
(illeccio.net; Sant'Angelo in Colle)

Sometimes simple dishes are the hardest to perfect. And perfection is the only term to use when discussing this trattoria in Brunello heartland. Watching the chef make his way between his stove and kitchen garden to gather produce for each order puts a whole new spin on the word 'fresh', and both the results and the house Brunello are spectacular.

La BucacciaTUSCAN ££
(labucaccia.it; Via Ghibellina 17, Cortona)

The finest address in the spectacularly sited hilltop town of Cortona, this gourmet treasure resides in the medieval stable of a Renaissance palazzo. Cuisine is Tuscan and Cortonese – much meat and handmade pasta (chestnut ravioli!) – and the cheese course is superb. Reservations are essential.

La Terrazza del ChiostroMODERN ITALIAN £££
(laterrazzadelchiostro.it; Via del Balzello, Pienza)

Chef Alessandro Rossi was one of the youngest-ever recipients of an Italian Michelin star and clearly has ambitions to reprise his success here. Dining on the gorgeous terrace with its panoramic view is the stuff of which lasting travel memories are made, and the food has plenty of pizzazz – to fully appreciate it, opt for a set menu.

L'Osteria di Casa ChiantiTUSCAN ££
(osteriadicasachianti.it; Località Case Nuove 77, Fiano)

The type of restaurant that fuels fantasies of moving permanently to Tuscany, this ultra-friendly eatery bakes its own bread, makes pasta by hand, grills bistecca on a wood fire, specialises in truffle and porcini mushroom dishes, and has an exceptional wine list. It also imparts the secrets of its delectable cooking in 4½-hour classes. Book ahead.

Trattoria L'AngoloTUSCAN £
(00 39 0577 84 80 17; Via Ricasoli 9, Montalcino)

We thought about keeping schtum about this place, but it

seemed selfish not to share our love for its pasta dishes with our loyal readers. Be it a vegetarian option (ravioli stuffed with ricotta and truffles) or carnivorous (pappardelle with wild-boar sauce), the handmade primi here are uniformly excellent. Secondi aren't as impressive.

DRINKING**Antinori nel Chianti Classico**££
(antinorichianticlassico.it; San Casciano in Val di Pesa)

Marco Casaminti's sculptural building set into the hillside is a landmark sight on the autostrada just south of Florence, and is one of the world's most impressive examples of contemporary winery design. Daily guided tours visit the wine-making and fermentation areas before heading to one of the glass tasting rooms cantilevered over the barriques in the cathedral-like ageing cellar for a tutored tasting of Antinori wines.

Cantina de' Ricci£
(cantinadericci.it; Via Ricci 11, Montepulciano)

The most evocative of Montepulciano's wine cellars, this cantina lies at the foot of a steep winding staircase in the Renaissance-era Palazzo Ricci. Immense vaulted stone encasements surround two-storey-high barrels. Dimly lit and hushed, it's like a cathedral of wine. Entry is free, but tastings are charged.

Petra Wine£££
(petrawine.it; Località San Lorenzo Alto 131, Suvereto)

On first sight, Petra resembles a huge pink Mayan temple that has been mysteriously transported to this rural pocket of Tuscany. Designed by acclaimed Swiss architect Mario Botta, the building is inserted into the hillside and houses an environmentally sustainable winery producing 100% organic wines under the Petra and Belvento labels. Email ahead to book a tour of the building, which features an extraordinary purple-lit underground ageing tunnel among other state-of-the-art features, followed by a tasting of the company's excellent wines.

Siena's pilgrim trail* **START: PORTA CAMOLLIA*** **FINISH: MUSEALE SANTA MARIA DELLA SCALA*** **LENGTH: ONE MILE; TWO HOURS**

Siena's Duomo (cathedral) dates from the 13th century

In medieval times, thousands of pilgrims walked the **Via Francigena**, a route connecting the great cathedral at Canterbury in England with the holy city of Rome. Hilltop Siena was an important stop on the route and many buildings built to meet the needs of pilgrims remain along Via Camollia, the road on which they entered the city.

Start your much shorter walk at **Porta Camollia** ❶, one of the original gates in the 13th-century city walls. Then head south – you are now in the Contrada Sovrana dell'Istrice (Porcupine Contrada), one of Siena's 17 historic districts. On your right you'll pass the

Romanesque **Chiesa di San Pietro alla Magione** ❷ (cnr Via Camollia & Via Malta), the Sienese base of the Knights Templar and (later) Knights of Malta. On its northern façade is a fountain featuring a carved stone porcupine.

Continue walking: to your right, down Via di Fontegusta, you'll see the 15th-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria in Portico a Fontegiusta** ❸ (Via di Fontegiusta), built to thank the Virgin Mary for the Sienese victory over the Florentines in the Battle of Poggio Imperiale (1479).

Via Camollia soon becomes Via Montanini. To your left is the 12th-century **Chiesa di Sant'Andrea Apostolo** ❹ (Via dei Montanini 140). Further on, the street



PHOTOGRAPHS: PIETRO CANALI/STELLA CORNERS; MERCHANT/IVORY/RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE; COLLECTION/CHRISTOPHER ALAMY; BBC/RENAISSANCE FILMS/SAMUEL GOLDWYN CORONALD GRANT ARCHIVE

merges into one of the major thoroughfares of the historic centre, Via Banchi di Sopra. In medieval times, this was where wealthy families built their fortress-like palaces. Two of the most magnificent are the 14th-century **Palazzo Salimbeni** ⑤ (Piazza Salimbeni) – now the main offices of Monte dei Paschi di Siena, the oldest bank in the world – and 13th-century **Palazzo Tolomei** ⑥ (Via Banchi di Sopra). Next to Palazzo Tolomei is the **Chiesa di San Cristoforo** ⑦, dedicated to the patron saint of travellers and a popular pilgrim stop. Pause at **Bar Pasticcheria Nannini** ⑧ (pasticcerienannini.it; Via Banchi di Sopra 24) for a

coffee and one of its delicious biscotti (biscuits), then continue past the 13th-century **Loggia della Mercanzia** ⑨ (Croce del Travaglio), where pilgrims were officially welcomed to the city. Next, veer right into Via dei Pellegrini and then up to the major destination for every pilgrim: the Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta, or **Duomo** ⑩ (operaduomo.siena.it). Finish in front of the cathedral at **Santa Maria della Scala** ⑪ (santamaria.dellascala.com), built as a hospice for pilgrims. Be sure to enter and admire its magnificently frescoed Pellegrinaio (Pilgrim's Hall). For more about the **Via Francigena**, see viefrancigene.com.

Tuscany on film

Tuscany has long been a popular location for international film and TV shoots. The following are among the best:

***The English Patient* (Anthony Minghella; 1996)** Includes scenes shot in a monastery outside Pienza but is predominantly remembered for its lyrically beautiful sequence when Kip (Naveen Andrews) takes Hana (Juliette Binoche) into Arezzo's Cappella Bacci and hoists her aloft on ropes so that she can see Piero della Francesca's frescoes in the light of a flare.

***Gladiator* (Ridley Scott; 2000)** Those glorious shots of fields of wheat rippling in the breeze were filmed near Pienza.

***Hannibal* (Ridley Scott; 2001)** Parts of the sequel to *The Silence of the Lambs* were shot in Florence.

***Much Ado about Nothing* (Kenneth Branagh; 1993)** Branagh, Emma Thompson and Keanu Reeves star in this adaptation of Shakespeare's comedy; shot in Chianti.

***Quantum of Solace* (Marc Forster; 2008)** The 22nd Bond film featured great action sequences shot in Carrara and Siena.

***A Room with a View* (James Ivory; 1985)** Hugely popular period drama set in Florence; there was also a 2007 UK ITV adaptation by Andrew Davies.

***September Affair* (William Dieterle; 1950)** Joseph Cotten and Joan Fontaine fall in love in Florence; features Kurt Weill's *September Song*.

***Stealing Beauty* (Bernardo Bertolucci; 1996)** Liv Tyler grapples with her grief and burgeoning sexuality in the lush Tuscan countryside.

***Up at the Villa* (Philip Haas; 2000)** Sean Penn and Kristin Scott Thomas star in an adaptation of Somerset Maugham's novel.

***Where Angels Fear to Tread* (Charles Sturridge; 1991)** A fine cast including Helen Mirren, Judy Davis and Helena Bonham Carter stars in this period film shot in San Gimignano.

***Inferno* (Ron Howard; 2016)** Film adaptation of Dan Brown's 2013 novel in which Tom Hanks wakes up in a Florentine hospital; shot on location in Florence, Venice and Istanbul.

***Medici: Masters of Florence* (2016)** TV drama series set in 15th-century Florence, starring Dustin Hoffman, Stuart Martin and Richard Madden.



TOP PICKS



HILLTOP TUSCANY



MAP KEY

SIGHTS

- 1 Collegiata
- 2 Palazzo Pubblico
- 3 Pitigliano
- 4 Museo Etrusco Guarnacci
- 5 Santuario della Verna

ACTIVITIES

- 6 Bagni San Filippo
- 7 Cave di Marmo Tours
- 8 Via Panoramica

EATING

- 9 Gelateria Dondoli
- 10 Il Leccio
- 11 La Bucaccia
- 12 La Terrazza del Chiostro
- 13 L'Osteria di Casa Chianti
- 14 Trattoria L'Angolo

DRINKING

- 15 Antinori nel Chianti Classico
- 16 Cantina de' Ricci
- 17 Petra Wine

SLEEPING

- 1 Barbiolla Nuova
- 2 Conti di San Bonifacio
- 3 Fattoria di Rignana
- 4 Il Baciario
- 5 La Bandita
- 6 Palazzo Ravizza

Sleeping

Barbiolla Nuova

Best for farmstays
(barbiolla.it)

Self-catering apartments in old farmhouses are dotted around this biodynamic farm. Look out for fresh truffles at the farm shop.

Conti di San Bonifacio

Best for Tuscan wine
(contidisannonifacio.com)

Rooms at this winery are elegant, but there's also a pool, an excellent restaurant, a vineyard-facing terrace and activities on offer.

Fattoria di Rignana

Best for relaxation
(rignana.it)

The rustic farmhouse of this wine estate in Chianti has its own chapel and belltower along with glorious views and a large pool.

Il Baciario

Best for countryside
(baciario.com)

Clelia and Andrea's agriturismo has tranquil surrounds, sensational views, minimalist décor and delicious organic food.

La Bandita

Best for seclusion
(la-bandita.com)

Sophisticated urban style melds with stupendous scenery at this retreat in one of the most stunning sections of the Val d'Orcia.

Palazzo Ravizza

Best for breakfasts
(palazzoravizza.it)

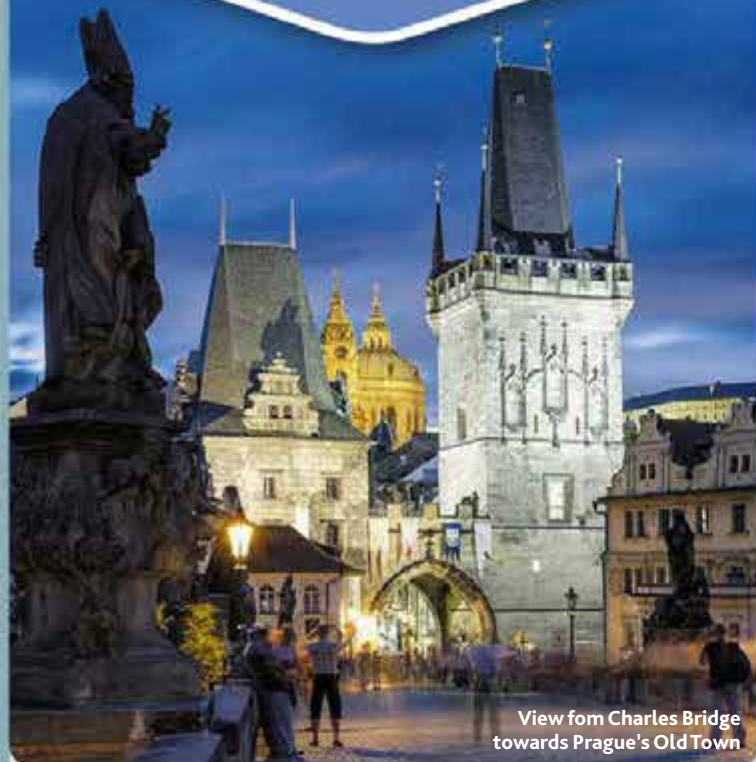
Occupying a Renaissance palazzo located in a quiet corner of Siena, this gorgeous hotel blends heritage features and modern amenities.



FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Florence & Tuscany* (£14.99) is an in-depth guide. Download its regional chapters for £2.99 each at lonelyplanet.com.

Nightlife in Prague



View from Charles Bridge towards Prague's Old Town

Czechs are the world's number one beer drinkers, and their historic capital has many time-tested pubs. Follow this guide to local favourites away from the crowds and a variety of alternatives to the amber nectar.

DRINKING

Beer Geek

(beergeek.cz; Vinohradská 62)

One of the most successful of a new generation of multi-tap pubs in Prague to offer beers from local producers as well as brewers from around the world. They have 32 taps and regularly rotate in hard-to-find labels. The 'geek' part of the name extends to the cool, lab-like presentation of the pub.

Cross Club

(crossclub.cz; Plynární 23)

An industrial club in every sense of the word: the setting in an industrial zone; the thumping music; and the interior, a jumble of shafts, cranks and pipes, many of which move and pulsate with light to the music. The programme includes live music, theatre performances and art events.

Hemingway Bar

(hemingwaybar.eu; Karolíny Světlé 26)

The Hemingway is a snug and sophisticated hideaway with leather benches, a library-like back room, candlelight, and polite bartenders. There's a huge range of quality spirits (especially rum), first-class cocktails, champagne and cigars.

Klášteří Pivovar Strahov

(klasterni-pivovar.cz; Strahovské nádvoří 301)

Dominated by two copper brewing kettles, this convivial pub in Strahov Monastery serves two varieties of its St Norbert beer – tmavý (dark), a rich, tarry brew with a full and creamy head, and polotmavý (amber), a full-bodied, hoppy lager. There's also a strong (6.3% abv) IPA-style beer.

Lokal Blok

(lokalblok.cz; Náměstí 14 října, 10)

The perfect Prague combination: a raucous pub and a state-of-the-art climbing wall (though presumably you're supposed to climb before you drink, not vice versa). Most nights there's a lively crowd, fuelled by Pilsner Urquell on tap and some good Mexican eats.

U Zlatého tygra

(uzlatehotygra.cz; Husova 17)

The 'Golden Tiger' is one of the few Old Town drinking holes that has hung on to its soul – and its reasonable prices, considering its central location. This was the place that former president Václav Havel took Bill Clinton in 1994 to show him a real Czech pub.

Vinograf

(vinograf.cz; Senovážné náměstí 23)

With knowledgeable staff, a relaxed atmosphere and an off-the-beaten-track feel, this modern wine bar is a great place to discover Moravian wines. There's good cheese and charcuterie too, with menus written on big blackboards. Another branch is in Malá Strana.

Jazz Dock

(jazzdock.cz; Janáčkovo nábřeží 2)

Most of Prague's jazz clubs are smoky cellar affairs, but this riverside club has modern décor and a romantic view over the Vltava. It draws some of the best local talent and international acts. Go early or book to get a good table. Shows typically begin at 7pm and 10pm.

MeetFactory

(meetfactory.cz; Ke Sklárně 15)

David Černý's MeetFactory is a remarkable project that unites artists from around the world to live and create in an abandoned factory south of Smíchovské nádraží station. The space is used for exhibitions, film screenings, theatre and concerts.

Palác Akropolis

(palacakropolis.cz; Kubelíkova 27)

The Akropolis is a Prague institution, a smoky shrine to alternative music and drama. Its performance spaces host musical and cultural events, from DJs to string quartets to Macedonian Roma bands to local rock gods. The Flaming Lips, Marianne Faithfull and the Strokes have played here.

ENTERTAINMENT

La Fabrika

(lafabrika.cz; Komunardů 30)

The name refers to a 'factory', but this is actually a former paint warehouse that's been converted into a performance space. Come to catch live music, theatre, dance or film. See the website for current the programme and book early.

Roxy

(roxy.cz; Dlouhá 33)

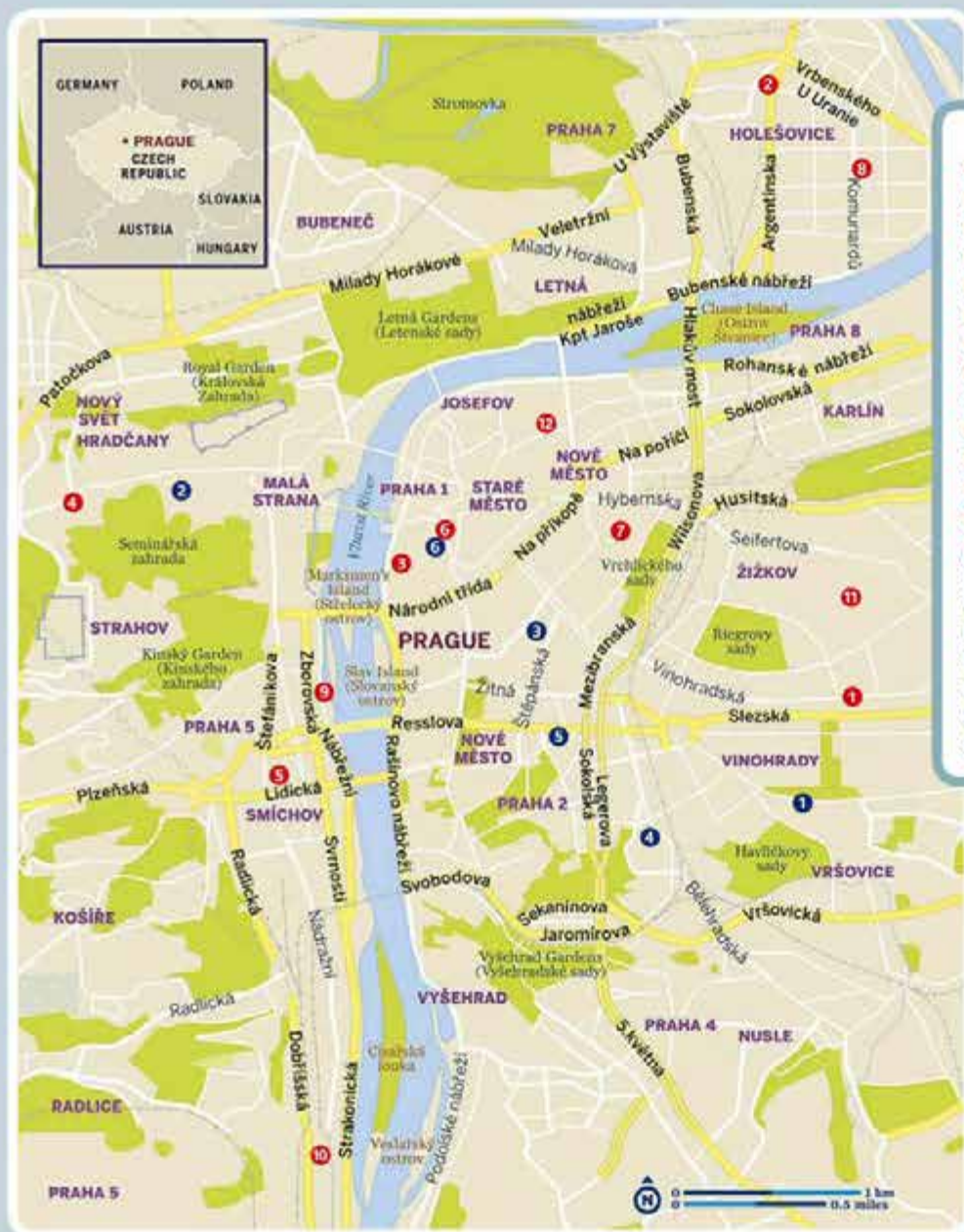
Set in a ramshackle former Art-Deco cinema, the Roxy has nurtured the more independent and innovative end of Prague's club spectrum since 1987. On the first floor is NoD, staging drama, dance, cinema and live music. Best nightspot in Staré Město.

Local knowledge

For pre-pub eats, join locals Martin, Zuzi and Jan, who are passionate about Prague's restaurant scene. They lead four-hour foodie tours of the city, tasting trad and modern Czech dishes and drinks in a variety of venues, with intriguing cultural asides along the way. Private tasting tours of Moravian vineyards can also be arranged (tasteofprague.com).



NIGHTLIFE IN PRAGUE



MAP KEY

- DRINKING
- 1 Beer Geek
- 2 Cross Club
- 3 Hemingway Bar
- 4 Klášterní Pivovar Strahov
- 5 Lokal Blok
- 6 U Zlatého tygra
- 7 Vinograf
- ENTERTAINMENT
- 8 La Fabrika
- 9 Jazz Dock
- 10 MeetFactory
- 11 Palác Akropolis
- 12 Roxy
- SLEEPING
- 1 Czech Inn
- 2 Dům u velké boty
- 3 The Icon
- 4 Le Palais Hotel
- 5 Sophie's Hostel
- 6 U Zeleného věnce

TOP PICKS

Sleeping

Czech Inn

Best for budget sleeps
(czech-inn.com)

A hostel that seems more like a boutique hotel, with its industrial-chic décor. Private rooms and apartments are also on offer.

Dům u velké boty

Best for a home-from-home feel
(dumvelkeboty.cz)

The elegant little 'House at the Big Boot' is just 10 minutes' walk from the castle and Charles Bridge. The owners are unfailingly helpful.

The Icon

Best for being seen
(iconhotel.eu)

Pretty much everything in this boutique hotel has a designer stamp on it. The Icon appears on Europe's trendiest hotels lists.

Le Palais Hotel

Best for decadence
(lepalaishotel.eu)

This Belle-Époque building was once home to artist Luděk Marold. Le Palais Hotel has stunning views of the Vyšehrad fortress.

Sophie's Hostel

Best for atmosphere
(sophieshostel.com)

Parquet flooring, metal-framed beds and designer rainfall showers add a contemporary touch to this backpacker favourite.

U Zeleného věnce

Best for location
(uzv.cz)

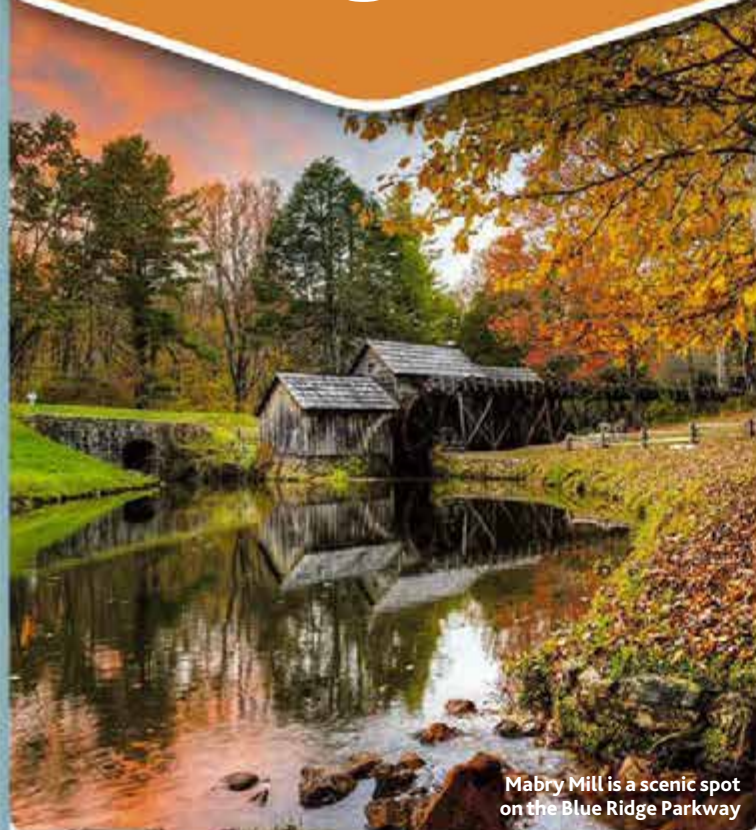
The 'Green Garland' is a rustic retreat minutes from the Old Town Square. The English-speaking owner is polite and helpful.



FURTHER READING

Pick up our *Prague & the Czech Republic* guide (£13.99). The city also features in our Guides app (free download from app stores).

Best of Virginia



Mabry Mill is a scenic spot on the Blue Ridge Parkway

The Old Dominion has been at the centre of American history for more than 400 years.

We've got its standout sights covered, but you'll also find backroads drives, mountain music and a budding wine region.

SIGHTS

Arlington National Cemetery

(arlingtoncemetery.mil)

Arlington is the final resting place for more than 400,000 military personnel and their dependents. Highlights include the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, with its changing of the guard ceremony, and the grave of John F Kennedy, marked by an eternal flame. The Iwo Jima Memorial, displaying the famous raising of the flag, is on the northern fringes.

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge

(fws.gov/refuge/chincoteague)

This Eastern Shore preserve has hiking trails where you can look for the wild horses made famous in Marguerite Henry's 1947 children's novel *Misty of Chincoteague*. There is also an Atlantic beachfront and lighthouse.

coteague. There is also an Atlantic beachfront and lighthouse.

Colonial Williamsburg

The restored capital of colonial Virginia is not a phony theme park: it's a working museum with a well-researched environment that brilliantly captures America of the 1700s. The huge historic area contains 88 original 18th-century buildings and many more reproductions. Costumed townsfolk in period dress go about their colonial jobs as blacksmiths, apothecaries, printers, barmaids, soldiers and patriots, breaking character just long enough to pose for a photograph. Walking around the district and patronising the shops and taverns is free, but entry to building tours and most exhibits is for ticketholders.

Monticello

(monticello.org)

Monticello is an architectural masterpiece designed by the third US president Thomas Jefferson. Built in Roman Neoclassical style, the house was the centre of a 5,000-acre plantation tended by 150 slaves. Monticello does not gloss over the complicated past of the man who declared that 'all men are created equal', while owning slaves and fathering children with slave Sally Hemings. Visits to the house are by guided tours. Shuttles run from the visitor centre to the hilltop house, or you can take the wooded footpath.

Shenandoah National Park

(nps.gov/shen)

Set against a backdrop of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Shenandoah is like a new smile from nature. In autumn, the leaves burn bright red and orange. White-tailed deer are common and, if you're lucky, you might spot a black bear, bobcat or wild turkey. Skyline Drive is the breathtaking road that follows the main ridge of the mountains and winds 105 miles through the centre of the park. Your first stop should be the Dickey Ridge Visitors Center at Mile 4.6, or the Byrd Visitors Center at Mile 50. Both have exhibits on flora and fauna, as well as maps and information about activities, including the 500 miles of hiking trails in the park.

Steven F Udvar-Hazy Center

(airandspace.si.edu/visit/udvar-hazy-center)

The National Air and Space Museum on Washington DC's Mall is so awesome they made an attic for it: the Steven F Udvar-Hazy Center, in Chantilly, VA. It's three times the size of the original and sprawls through massive hangars near Washington Dulles International Airport. Highlights include the space shuttle *Discovery*.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

(vmfa.museum; 200 N Blvd, Richmond)

The VFMA has a remarkable collection of European works, sacred Himalayan art and the largest Fabergé egg collection on display

outside Russia. Don't miss Andy Warhol's *Triple Elvis*.

ACTIVITIES

Hawksbill Summit

(nps.gov/shen)

This tremendous climb to the highest peak in Shenandoah National Park offers an unforgettable picture of the mountain landscape. There are two options for this climb – either a 2.8-mile loop or 1.7-mile up-and-back. For the latter, start at the Hawksbill Gap parking area (Mile 45.6) and look for the Lower Hawksbill Trail, which leads into the woods.

Worth a detour

When Scots-Irish fiddle-and-reel joined with African American banjo-and-percussion, American mountain or 'old-time' music was born, spawning such genres as country and bluegrass. The latter genre still dominates the Blue Ridge, and Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, the 330-mile-long **Crooked Road** (mysvwa.org/tcr), takes you through nine sites associated with that history, along with some eye-stretching mountain scenery. It's well worth taking a detour and joining the music-loving fans of all ages who kick up their heels (many arrive with tap shoes) at these festive jamborees. During a live show you'll witness elders connecting to deep cultural roots and a new generation of musicians keeping that heritage alive and evolving. Top venues include the Floyd Country Store on Friday Nights and the Carter Family Fold on Saturday nights (see p124).



Horse country

Forty miles west of Washington, DC, suburban sprawl gives way to endless green farms, vineyards, quaint villages and palatial estates and ponies. This is 'Horse Country,' where wealthy Washingtonians pursue their equestrian pastimes.

The following route is the most scenic drive to Shenandoah National Park. From DC, take Rte 50 West to **Middleburg**, a too-cute-for-words town of b&b's, taverns, wine shops and small boutiques. The **National Sporting Library** (nationalsporting.org) is a museum and research centre devoted to horse and field sports such as dressage, steeple-chase, foxhunting and polo. About 20 miles northeast of Middleburg is **Leesburg**, another charming town with a colonial feel and historic sites. Stop in **Morven Park** (morvenpark.org) for a tour of a staggering Virginia home on 1,000 acres. For more Greek Revival grandeur, visit **Oatlands Plantation** (oatlands.org), outside of town.

The area has a wealth of appealing dining options. Stop in the **Shoe's Cup & Cork** (shoescupandcork.com) in Leesburg for creative American fare or **Chimole** (facebook.com/ch1mole) for wine and Latin American tapas. In Middleburg, the **Red Fox Inn & Tavern** (redfox.com) has first-rate American cooking served in a beautifully preserved 1728 dining room.

Located six miles west of Middleburg, the **Welbourne b&b** (welbourneinn.com) has five heritage rooms set in a historic landmark house (c1770) surrounded by 520 acres. The **Leesburg Colonial Inn** (theleesburgcolonialinn.com) has a great location and unbeatable prices.

Further down the road at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains is **Sperryville**. Its many galleries and shops are a must-stop for antique-lovers. Continue nine miles west to reach the Thornton Gap entrance of Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park.

The steep ascent is lined with mountain ash and red spruce – beware of small, frequent rock-slides along the jumbled path. When you encounter a cement post, you'll know you're close to the summit. Go right until you see a three-sided building, the Byrds Nest Shelter 2 (no water or camping here). A little further up is the observation platform, which offers vistas in every direction.

Mount Vernon Trail

The 18.5-mile-long Mount Vernon Trail is a paved riverside path that is a favourite with local cyclists. From the Francis Scott Key Bridge, it follows the Potomac River south past Roosevelt Island and Arlington National Cemetery, through Old Town Alexandria, all the way to Mount Vernon – George Washington's historic home. The course is flat, except for a long climb at the end. The scenery is magnificent – DC skylines and all – and the historical component is certainly unique.

✕ EATING **Hawksbill Diner** DINER £

(facebook.com/TheHawksbillDiner; Hwy 340 Business, Stanley) It may be off the beaten path, but this well-loved place is everything you want in a diner: locals who all know each other, welcoming service and darn good Southern food, with dishes like country-fried steak with gravy on the menu. We like it for breakfast – don't miss the hash browns.

The Inn at Little Washington AMERICAN £££ (theinnatlittlewashington.com; Middle & Main Sts, Washington) One of the best restaurants ever – you should sell a kidney and make a reservation. Diners have their pick of three tasting menus, each more delectable than the other. Caviar, Japanese Wagyu beef and milk-fed porclet – only the very best is served.

L'Opossum AMERICAN-FRENCH £££ (lopossum.com; 626 China St, Richmond) We're not sure what's going on here, but it works. The name of the place is terrible. Statues of

Michelangelo's *David* pose here and there. And dishes come with names that are almost too hip, like the Darth Grouper Held at Bay by a Rebellious Coalition. What ties it together? The culinary prowess of award-winning chef David Shannon and his staff.

Lucky MODERN AMERICAN ££ (eatatlucky.com; 18 Kirk Ave SW, Roanoke)

Lucky has excellent cocktails (try The Cube) and a seasonally inspired menu of small plates (hickory-smoked porchetta, roasted oysters) and heartier mains (buttermilk fried chicken, morel and asparagus gnocchi). The team behind Lucky opened the equally divine Italian restaurant Fortunato (fortunatorestaurant.com) a few doors down, where the wood-fired pizzas are the stuff of dreams and poems.

Mabry Mill Restaurant AMERICAN £ (mabrymillrestaurant.com; Mile 176 off Blue Ridge Pkwy)

Next to the picturesque Mabry Mill, this place whips up some of the better breakfasts along the Blue Ridge Parkway. They've got three kinds of speciality pancakes – cornmeal, buckwheat and sweet potato. Throw in a biscuit with some Virginia ham and that's a perfect way to start your day.

The Shack AMERICAN ££ (theshackva.com; 105 S Coalter St, Staunton)

Folks flock here to dine on the eclectic creations of chef Ian Boden, a two-time semi-finalist for a James Beard Award, now cooking in a shack on the edge of downtown Staunton. The menu changes regularly but look for Southern specialties like catfish along with high-falutin' numbers like lamb-chetta and soft-shell shrimp.

✕ DRINKING **Blue Mountain Brewery** £ (bluemountainbrewery.com; 9519 Critzer's Shop Rd, Afton)

Located 20 miles from Charlottesville near the gorgeous high slopes of Skyline Dr, Blue Mountain Brewery is some kind of wonderful. These guys are dedicated to their craft and their

beers, which include a crisp Bavarian-style wheat beer perfect in the hot summer swelter, and the muscular Full Nelson, brewed with local hops.

The Whiskey Jar ££ (thewhiskeyjarville.com; 227 W Main St, Charlottesville)

On the pedestrian mall, The Whiskey Jar offers more than 125 varieties of whiskey in a rustic setting – wooden furniture with waitstaff wearing plaid and drinks in Mason jars. And, if you like your Bloody Mary's spicy – it will be spicy. Also serves neo-Southern comfort food.

☆ ENTERTAINMENT **Blackfriars Playhouse** ££ (americanshakespearecenter.com; 10 S Market St, Staunton)

Catch a show at the Blackfriars Playhouse, where the American Shakespeare Center company performs in the world's only recreation of Shakespeare's original indoor theatre. The acting is up-close and engaged, and brave guests can grab a seat on the side of the stage.

Carter Family Fold £ (carterfamilyfold.org; 3449 AP Carter Hwy, Hiltons)

In a hamlet in southwest Virginia, you'll find one of the hallowed birthplaces of mountain music. The Carter Family Fold continues the musical legacy begun by the Carter family in 1927. Every Saturday, the 900-person arena hosts first-rate bluegrass and gospel bands; there's also a museum with memorabilia and the original mid-1800s log cabin where AP Carter was born. Johnny Cash, husband of June Carter, played his last show at the fold in 2003.

Floyd Country Store £ (floydcountrystore.com; 206 S Locust St, Floyd)

This place is why everyone's in Floyd, especially for the Friday Night Jamboree, featuring bluegrass bands and the chance to watch happy crowds jam to regional heritage music. No smokin', no drinkin', but plenty of dancin' (of the flat footing style) and good cheer. On warm nights you'll likely catch music jams on the sidewalk outside.



Grazing outside Middleburg.
ABOVE FROM LEFT A red
phone box in Middleburg;
shopping on Washington St



Virginia's vineyards

Home to some 230 vineyards, Virginia has a rising presence in the wine world. Good places to begin the foray lie just outside of DC in Loudon County. For maps, wine routes and loads of other viticultural info, visit virginiawine.org.

King Family Vineyards (kingfamilyvineyards.com) Consistently ranks as one of Virginia's best wineries. Bring a picnic (the winery also sells gourmet goodies) and enjoy the expansive scenery. It's 18 miles east of Charlottesville.

Chrysalis Vineyards (chrysaliswine.com) Proudly using the native Norton grape (which dates back to 1820), Chrysalis produces highly drinkable reds and whites – including a refreshing Viognier. The pretty estate hosts a bluegrass fest in October.

Bluemont Vineyard (bluemontvineyard.com) Bluemont produces ruby-red Nortons and crisp Viogniers, though it's equally famous for its spectacular location – at a 950ft elevation with sweeping views over the countryside.

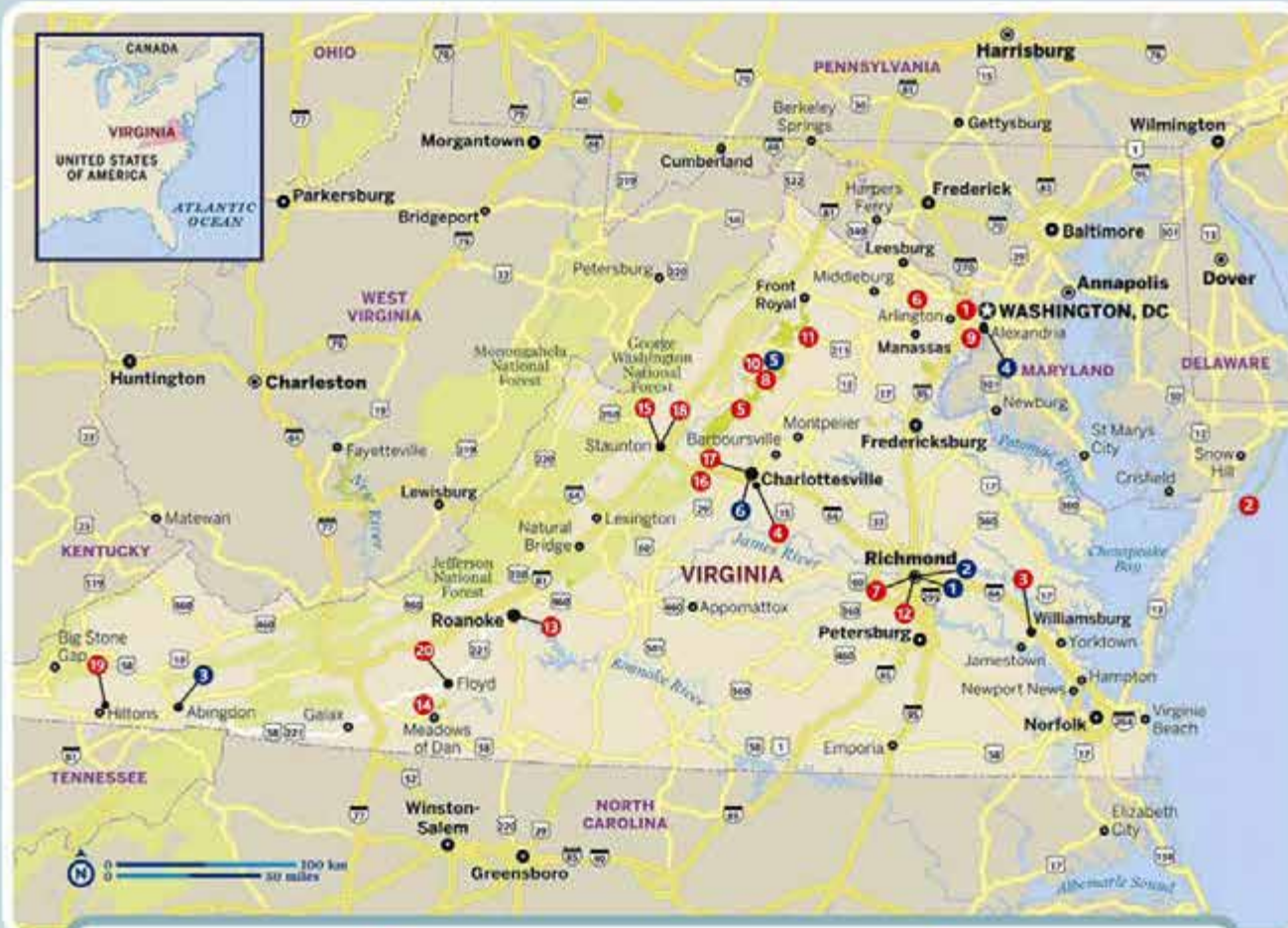
Tarara Vineyard (tarara.com) On a bluff overlooking the Potomac, this 475-acre estate provides guided tours showing the grape's journey from vine to glass. The winery has a 6,000-sq-ft cave/cellar, and visitors can pick fruit in the orchard or hike the 6 miles of trails through rolling countryside.

Jefferson Vineyards (jeffersonvineyards.com) Close to Charlottesville, this winery harvests from its namesake's original 1774 vineyard site.

The revived Jefferson Vineyards has been producing wine since the early 1980s



BEST OF VIRGINIA



MAP KEY

SIGHTS

- 1 Arlington National Cemetery
- 2 Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge
- 3 Colonial Williamsburg
- 4 Monticello
- 5 Shenandoah National Park

ACTIVITIES

- 6 Steven F Udvar-Hazy Center
- 7 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
- 8 Hawksbill Summit
- 9 Mount Vernon Trail
- 10 Hawksbill Diner
- 11 The Inn at Little

EATING

- 12 L'Opossum
- 13 Lucky
- 14 Mabry Mill Restaurant
- 15 The Shack
- 16 Blue Mountain Brewery
- 17 The Whiskey Jar
- 18 Blackfriars Playhouse

DRINKING

- 19 Carter Family Fold
- 20 Floyd Country Store

SLEEPING

- 1 HI Richmond
- 2 Jefferson Hotel
- 3 Martha Washington Inn
- 4 Morrison House
- 5 Skyland Resort
- 6 200 South Street Inn

ENTERTAINMENT

- 12 L'Opossum
- 13 Lucky
- 14 Mabry Mill Restaurant
- 15 The Shack
- 16 Blue Mountain Brewery
- 17 The Whiskey Jar
- 18 Blackfriars Playhouse

Sleeping

HI Richmond

Best for budget sleeps
(hiusa.org)

Inside a historic 1924 building, this eco-friendly hostel has bright rooms (dorms and private), with high ceilings and original details.

Jefferson Hotel

Best for opulence
(jeffersonhotel.com)

Rooms are plush but inviting at Richmond's top hotel. The staircase is said to be the model for the stairs in *Gone with the Wind*.

Martha Washington Inn

Best for country escapes
(themartha.com)

Southwestern Virginia's premier historic hotel has wrought-iron style and rocking chairs on the pleasant front porch

Morrison House

Best for contemporary appeal
(morrisonhouse.com)

A romantic Alexandria mainstay, this boutique hotel combines four-poster beds, bright blue artwork and natural light everywhere.

Skyland Resort

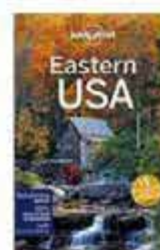
Best for national park lodging
(goshenandoah.com)

This beautifully set resort has lovely views over the Shenandoah countryside, wood-finished rooms and rustic but comfy cabins.

200 South Street Inn

Best for couples
(southstreetinn.com)

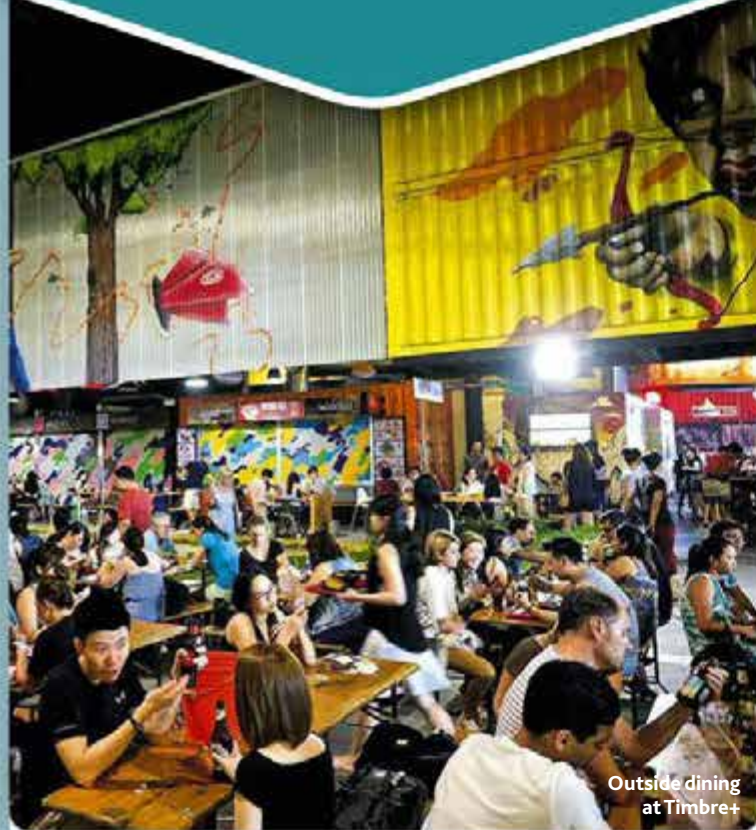
In downtown Charlottesville, this one-time girls' finishing school now houses two-dozen heritage-style b&b rooms.



FURTHER READING

Our *Eastern USA* (£15.99) covers Virginia in a chapter on Washington DC & the Capital Region (£2.99 for individual chapter download).

Eating in Singapore



Outside dining at Timbre+

A city-state shaped by Chinese, Malay, Indian and European influences, Singapore was bound to impress at mealtimes. You'll find a choice pick of restaurants here, but the true spirit of the city is in its hawker centres.

✖ CHEAP EATS

Ah Chiang's CHINESE £
(facebook.com/ahchiangporridge.sg; 01-38, 65 Tiong Poh Rd)

Join gossiping uncles and Gen-Y hipsters here for a little Cantonese soul food. The star turn at this retro corner kopitiam (coffeeshop) is charcoal-fired congee (a rice-based porridge). Do not pass by the raw sliced fish, delectably drizzled with sesame oil.

Gluttons Bay HAWKER £
(makansutra.com; 01-15 Esplanade Mall, 8 Raffles Ave)

Selected by the *Makansutra Food Guide*, this row of hawker stalls is a great place to start your Singapore food odyssey. Try oyster omelette, satay, barbecue stingray and black carrot cake. Its central, bay-side location makes it a huge hit, so head in early or late for a table.

Timbre+

HAWKER £

(timbreplus.sg; JTC LaunchPad@ one-north, 73A Ayer Rajah Cres)

Welcome to the new generation of hawker centres. With over 30 food outlets, Timbre+ has it all: art-work-covered shipping containers, Airstream food trucks, craft beer and live music. But it's the food that draws the crowds: a mixture of traditional and new age. Head here before the old-school hawker stalls shut at 6pm.

Zam Zam

MALAYSIAN £

(zamzamsingapore.com; 697-699 North Bridge Rd)

These guys have been here since 1908, so they know what they're doing. Frenetic chefs inside whip up murtabak: the restaurant's speciality savoury pancakes, filled with mutton, chicken, beef, venison or sardines. Servings are epic.

✖ MID-RANGE MEALS

Lagnaa Barefoot Dining

INDIAN

££

(lagnaa.com; 6 Upper Dickson Rd)

You can choose your level of spice at Lagnaa: level three denotes standard spiciness, level four significant spiciness, and anything above admirable bravery. You're in for finger-licking-good home-style cooking from both ends of Mother India, devoured at seating downstairs or on cushions upstairs. Indecisive? Order the chef's famous Threadfin fish curry.

National Kitchen by

Violet Oon

PERANAKAN ££

(violetoon.com; 02-01 National Gallery Singapore, St Andrew's Rd)

Chef Violet Oon is a national treasure, loved for her Peranakan (Chinese-Malay fusion) dishes. Feast on sweet, spicy kueh pie tee (prawn- and yam bean-stuffed pastry), laksa and beef rendang in Singapore's National Gallery. The restaurant touches on Singapore's other culinary traditions, from Indian and Eurasian to Hainanese. High tea offers a sampling of Violet's signature flavours.

Paradise Dynasty

CHINESE ££

(paradisegroup.com.sg; 04-12A ION Orchard, 2 Orchard Turn)

Staffers in headsets whisk you into this dumpling den, passing a glassed-in kitchen where Chinese chefs stretch noodles and steam buns. Skip the novelty-flavoured xiao long bao (soup dumplings)

for the original version. Standouts also include la mian (hand-pulled noodles) with braised pork belly.

✖ FINE DINING

Candlenut

PERANAKAN £££

(comodempsey.sg/candlenut; Block 17A, Dempsey Rd)

The only Peranakan restaurant with a Michelin star, Candlenut is where Singaporeans head to impress the out-of-towners. Chef Malcolm Lee elevates Straits Chinese dishes to new culinary heights. The baby squid with ink, tamarind and chillis is superb.

Jumbo Seafood

CHINESE £££

(jumboseafood.com.sg; 01-01/02 Riverside Point, 30 Merchant Rd)

If you're lusting after chilli crab this is a good place to indulge. The gravy is sweet and nutty, with a touch of chilli. Order mantou (fried buns) to soak up the gravy. While all Jumbo's outlets have the dish down to an art, this one has a riverside location.

Odette

MODERN FRENCH £££

(odetterestaurant.com; 01-04 National Gallery Singapore, St Andrew's Rd)

Muscling in on Singapore's fine dining scene, this restaurant had people talking even before the first dish left the kitchen. With Julien Royer at the helm, menus are guided by the seasons. The space is stunning, with a soft colour palette and an aerial installation by local artist Dawn Ng. Book early.

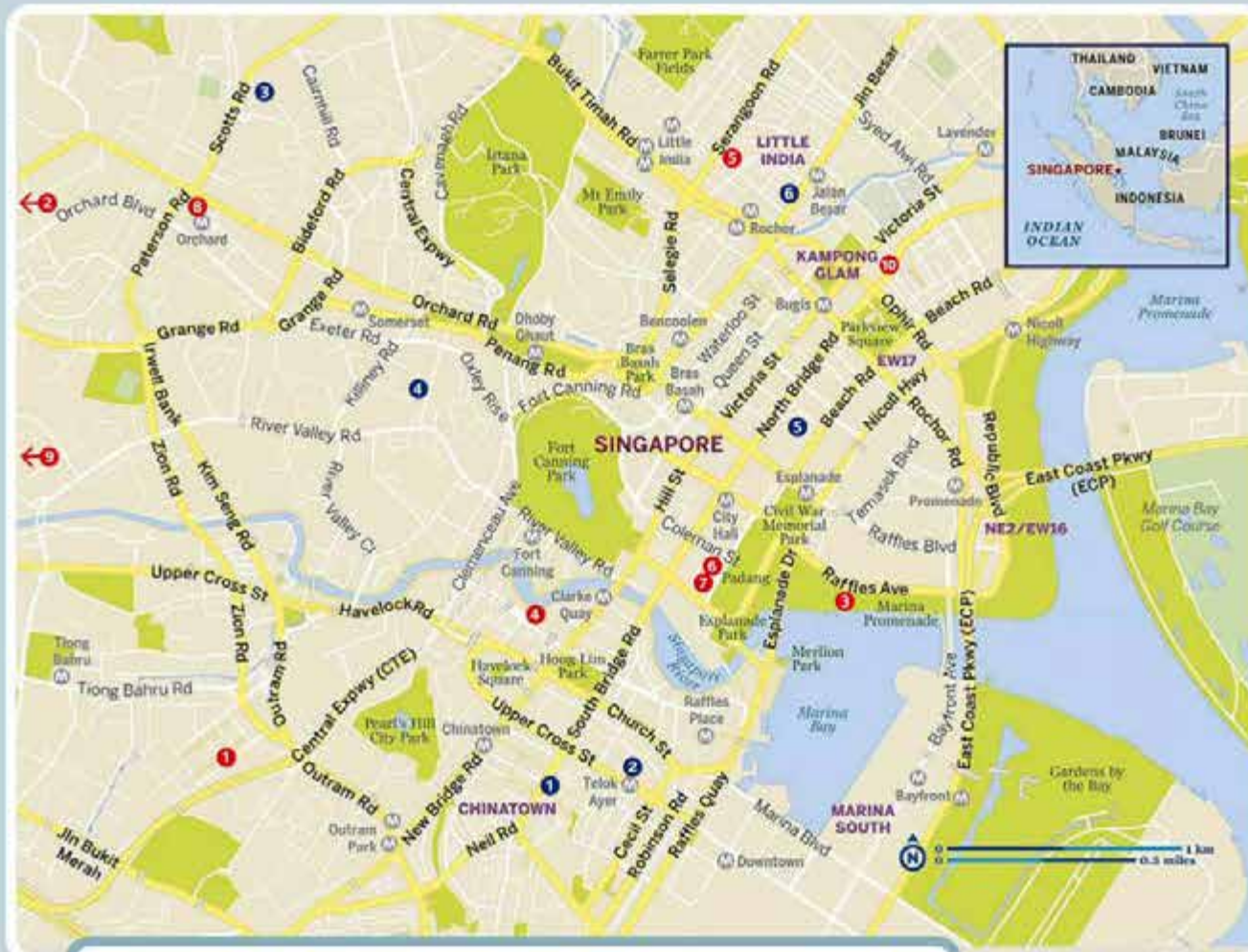
Local knowledge

Singapore's celebrated hawker centres serve up knockout street food at wallet-friendly prices. Here is some essential hawker centre etiquette:

- Bag a seat first, especially if it's busy. Sit a member of your group at a table, or 'chope' (save) your seat by laying a packet of tissues there. Don't worry if there are no completely free tables; it's normal to share with strangers.
- If there's a table number, note it as the stall owner uses it as reference for food delivery.
- If the stall has a 'self service' sign, you'll have to carry the food to the table yourself. Otherwise, the vendor brings your order to you.
- Ignore touts who try to sit you down and put menus in front of you.
- It's customary to return your tray once finished, although there are some cleaners who'll take your empty dishes.



EATING IN SINGAPORE



MAP KEY

EATING

- 1 Ah Chiang's
- 2 Candlenut
- 3 Gluttons Bay
- 4 Jumbo Seafood
- 5 Lagnaa Barefoot Dining

National Kitchen by Violet Oon

- 6 Odette
- 7 Paradise Dynasty
- 8 Timbre+
- 9 Zam Zam

SLEEPING

- 1 Adler Singapore
- 2 Amoy
- 3 Goodwood Park Hotel
- 4 Lloyd's Inn
- 5 Naumi
- 6 Wanderlust

Sleeping

Adler Singapore

£

Best for budget sleeps
(adlerhostel.com)

Hostelling reaches sophisticated heights at this 'poshtel'. Custom-made cabins have lockers and curtains. Some have king-size beds.

Amoy

££

Best for Singaporean style
(stayfareast.com)

Amoy is no ordinary hotel, from its novel entrance through a Chinese temple to custom-made opium beds and Ming-style basins.

Goodwood Park Hotel

£££

Best for history
(goodwoodparkhotel.com)

Dating back to 1900, this wonderful hotel with gracious service feels like an elegant, old-world retreat. There are two lovely pools.

Lloyd's Inn

££

Best for calm in the city
(lloyddinn.com)

This pared-back boutique hotel exudes tranquillity through its connection with nature. There's a dipping pool and rooftop terrace.

Naumi

£££

Best for luxury
(naumihotel.com)

Cool and slinky Naumi comes with artwork, a rooftop infinity pool and skyline views. Suites here are decadent and extraordinary.

Wanderlust

££

Best for surprise
(wanderlusthotel.com)

Wanderlust delivers wow factor with its imaginative rooms, ranging from Pantone-bright themes to comic-book 'mono' rooms.



FURTHER READING

Pick up our *Singapore* guidebook (£13.99). The city also features in our Guides app (free download from app stores).

WIN a trip in the Catalan Pyrenees

Worth
£2,600



Val d'Aran is a popular destination for hiking excursions

We've teamed up with the Catalan Tourist Board to offer one *Lonely Planet Traveller* reader and their guest a four-night adventure in the Western Catalan Pyrenees, lead by Edurne Pasaban, the first woman to climb all 14 of the world's peaks over 8,000 metres.

After arriving in Val d'Aran, you'll discover the region's dramatic terrain through guided trekking in Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici National Park, canyoning and rock climbing in a via ferrata (an iron path), which consists of anchored cables, rungs, steps and ladders. You'll also enjoy a guided mountain bike tour.

To fuel these feats, you'll dine in local restaurants, where you can sample a range of hearty Aranese cuisine, such as charcoal-grilled meats and river trout.

As you explore ancient routes in this unique mountainous landscape – which features a wide range of ecosystems – you will be immersed in the culture, history, mythology and gastronomy of the great region of Catalonia.

THE PRIZE

- ▶ Two return flights with Vueling and transfers from London to Val d'Aran
- ▶ Four nights' three-star b&b accommodation in Val d'Aran
- ▶ Guided trekking, canyoning and climbing, including picnic and transfers
- ▶ MTB guided tour in Val d'Aran, including picnic and transfers
- ▶ Four dinners at local restaurants, sampling a range of typical Aranese cuisine

HOW TO ENTER

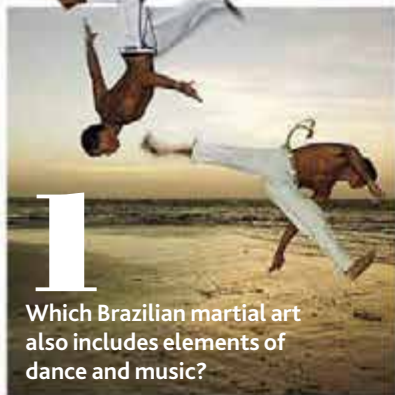
To be in with a chance of winning this fantastic prize, fill in your details online at the address below. Competition closes at 11.59pm on Sunday 12 Nov 2017.

lonelyplanet.com/magazine/competitions

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

1. The promoter of this competition is Immediate Media Company London Limited. 2. The prize includes two return flights from London Gatwick to Barcelona, or London Luton to Toulouse with Vueling; transfers from Barcelona/Toulouse to Val d'Aran; four nights' three-star b&b accommodation in Val d'Aran; guided trekking in Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici National Park (including picnic lunch and transfers); canyoning and climbing (via ferrata) in Val d'Aran (including picnic lunch and transfers); MTB guided tour (including picnic lunch and transfers); four dinners in local restaurants in Val d'Aran. 3. Travel must be taken between 1 May and 31 October 2018. Travel not permitted 28 May–1 June, 16 July–5 September, 13–21 October 2018. Hotels, activities and flights are subject to availability. 4. The prize does not include travel insurance, visas (if applicable), additional meals and refreshments, UK transfers, optional activities or spending money. 5. The winner and their guest must be at least 18 years old and hold valid 10-year UK passports, with six months or more remaining after return to the UK. 6. For full terms and conditions, visit lonelyplanet.com/magazine/competitions.

What on Earth?



1

Which Brazilian martial art also includes elements of dance and music?



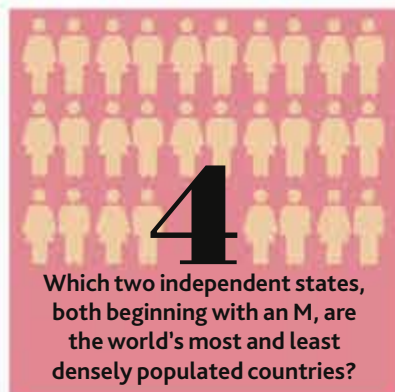
2

In which European capital can you see this monument to the country's explorers?



3

It's 50 years since the death of China's last emperor – the subject of an Oscar-winning film. Which Beijing landmark was his home?



4

Which two independent states, both beginning with an M, are the world's most and least densely populated countries?



5

Which present US state has a holiday on 18 October to mark the date it was purchased from Russia exactly 150 years ago?



6

The 'Merlion' is a symbol of which Southeast Asian island city-state?



7

Piedmont in northwestern Italy offers an autumn bonanza for truffle hunters. Which is the region's largest city?



8

Mount Kosciuszko – named after a Polish revolutionary who died 200 years ago this October – is the highest point of which otherwise snow-poor country?



9

The harvest festival of Tbilisoba in late October also celebrates the founding of the city of Tbilisi. Of which country is it the capital?

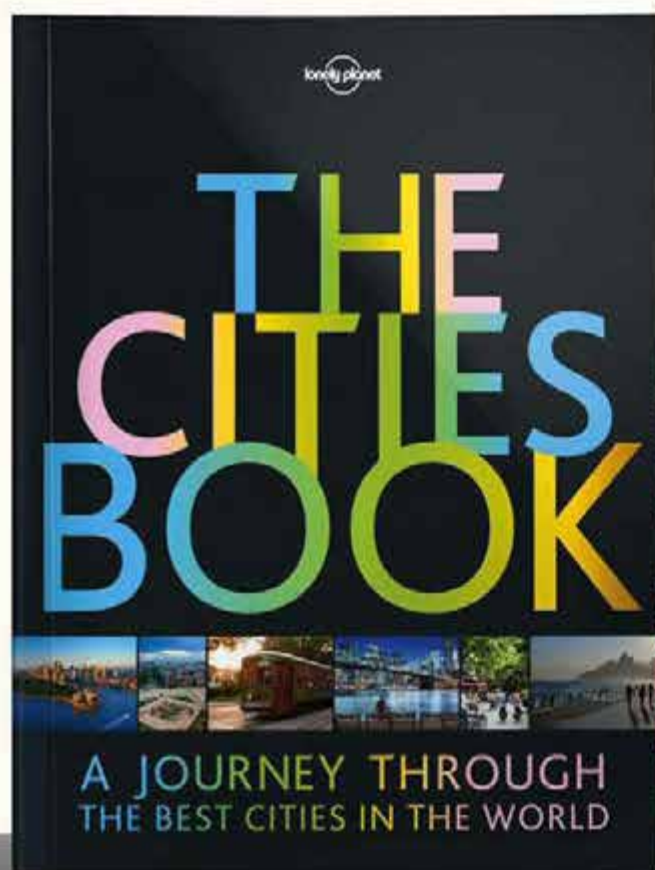
COMPILED BY RORY COULDING. PHOTOGRAPHS: CRAFT VISION/ISTOCK/GETTY, HILDA WEGES/GETTY, WORLD HISTORY ARCHIVE/ALAMY, GEORGE LEPP/GETTY, TETIANA KOZACHOK/ALAMY, DARIO FUSARO/CEPHAS/ALAMY, PETER LENK/ALAMY, VANO SHLAMOY/AP/GETTY

YOU WANT ANSWERS?

1) CAPOEIRA. 2) LISBON. 3) THE FORBIDDEN CITY. 4) MONACO AND MONGOLIA. 5) ALASKA. 6) SINGAPORE. 7) TURIN. 8) AUSTRALIA. 9) GEORGIA.

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BRITISH AIRWAYS

The city that never sleeps

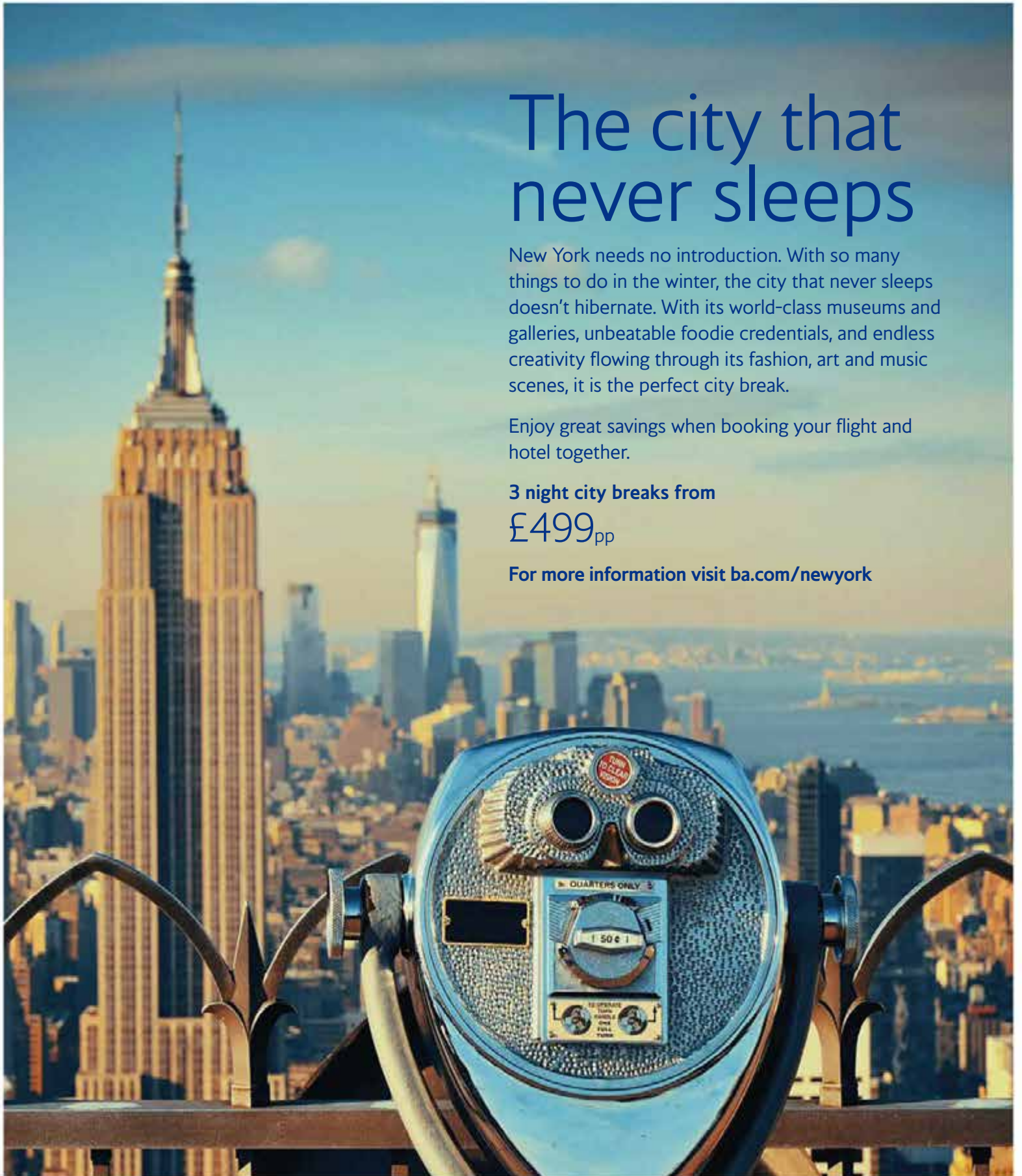
New York needs no introduction. With so many things to do in the winter, the city that never sleeps doesn't hibernate. With its world-class museums and galleries, unbeatable foodie credentials, and endless creativity flowing through its fashion, art and music scenes, it is the perfect city break.

Enjoy great savings when booking your flight and hotel together.

3 night city breaks from

£499_{pp}

For more information visit ba.com/newyork



Availability may be extremely limited, particularly during peak periods. All prices are in GBP per person and include return economy flights from London Heathrow to New York. Prices based on two adults sharing on an accommodation only board basis at 4★ Arlo Soho for selected January travel. Prices correct as of 01/09/17. Bookings must be made by midnight 31/10/17. Some payment methods attract a handling fee. Holidays are ATOL protected (number ATOL5985). For full terms and conditions, visit ba.com.